



# HOLY DIOCESE OF GLDANI GEORGIA



■ In the blessed country of St. Nina, Equal to the Apostles

## Pastoral Visit to the Holy Diocese of Gldani, Tbilisi, Georgia May 7-11, 2016 (Old Style)



**By the Grace** of our Resurrected Savior and under the Protection of our Mother, the *Panagia Portaitissa* “the Iberian,” we were vouchsafed to visit Georgia, the blessed country of St. Nina, Equal to the Apostles, for the third time in our capacity as *Locum Tenens*.

On the Friday before the Sunday of the Paralytic, May 7/20, 2016, we arrived in the middle of the night in Tbilisi, accompanied by the Reverend Father Jiří Ján and Subdeacon Antonios Hagiokyprianites.

It was around 3:30 a.m., and yet all of our Priests—Fathers Basili, Vakhtang, Gabriel, and the Reverend Archimandrite Father Grigol (Gregory)—together with a large throng of our faithful, bearing Icons, banners, and flags, and chanting Paschal hymns in Greek, greeted us with love, enthusiasm, and emotion.

We all went to the Cathedral Church of the *Panagia Portaitissa* in Gldani, where we conveyed to our small flock the best wishes of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos and of the Holy Synod.

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On the day of our arrival, we visited Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia, and venerated the places dedicated to St. Nina (Jvari, Svetitskhoveli, and Samtavro). Over the course of

the next four days we celebrated the Divine Liturgy daily and came into contact with our clergy and pious lay brethren, in our constant effort to consolidate the blessed Union of 2014.



On Saturday, May 8/21 (commemoration of St. John the Theologian and St. Arsenios the Great), we celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the parish Church of the Dormition of the *Theotokos*, where Father Gabriel is Rector; • on Sunday, May 9/22 (commemoration of the Holy Prophet Isaiah and the Holy Martyr Christopher), at the large Church of the *Panagia Portaitissa*, where Fathers Basili and Vakhtang are Rectors; • on Monday, May 10/23 (commemoration of the Holy Apostle Simon) at the Church of the Resurrection of Christ, where Father Grigol is Rector; • and on Tuesday, May 11/24 (commemoration of the Holy Hieromartyr Mokios and Sts. Methodios and Cyril, Equals to the Apostles) at the Community of the Precious Cross, on the Zedazeni mountain.

We concelebrated with our Priests in turn at these Liturgies, and on Sunday, for the first time since the Union of 2014, all of our Priests took part—the culmination of a profound relationship of love and fellowship, which was manifest throughout our sojourn. It was truly an exceptional blessing!

In our homilies at these times, we addressed words of edification and consolation to our brothers and sisters, having as our central message the Divine Nobility of our Savior and the three basic characteristics thereof (approach or encounter, respect, and counsel), which we also ought to embody in our relations with other people, since the truth of Faith must not be separated from love and refinement of manners (which are two sides of the same coin).



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As always, the profound piety, self-sacrificial hospitality, and boundless graciousness of the Georgians greatly impressed and moved us.

In the little time that re-



mained, we were vouchsafed the great gift of venerating the Holy *Mandelion* at the Museum of Tbilisi (a wondrous artifact of our Faith, which St. Anthony of Martqopi brought from Edessa, Syria, to Georgia in the sixth century), and also the sacred tomb and astonishing sixth-century Monastery of St. Shio (thirty kilometers from Tbilisi).

It is worth noting that a great multitude of the faithful, both young and old, partook of Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgies.

We are also grateful to relate that, by the aid of the *Theotokos*, the endeavor to reconcile a group of zealot lay brothers and sisters with their Shepherds was blessed with wondrous results. Glory to the God of Love and Peace!

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This was yet another pastoral visit filled with spiritual blessings, which had in view an ever more profound cultivation of the ecclesiastical mindset of our small flock in Georgia, this “second Greece,” which welcomed and hosted us garbed in her springtime finery. The beauty of nature, coupled with the spiritual comeliness of the pious Georgians, is beyond description!

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!



May 12, 2016 (Old Style)

† Wednesday of Mid-Pentecost

† Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle