His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greets Catholic-Patriarch of All Georgia Iliya II with the 40th anniversary of his enthronement

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia congratulated His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Iliya II on the 40th anniversary of his enthronement. The text of the message reads as follows:

Your Holiness and Beatitude,

Beloved in the Lord brother and concelebrant:

I wholeheartedly greet you with a remarkable date in your life and in the life of the Georgian Orthodox Church – the 40th anniversary of your enthronement.

You have ascended to the Throne of Patriarchs of the Georgian Orthodox Church by God's will and with the unanimous decision of the Blessed Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Through the help of Christ the Saviour you perform your noble ministry "by purity, knowledge, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God" (2 Cor 6:6-7). Your Holiness and Beatitude, you deserve credit for the abundant fruits that have grown from the seeds of the true faith sown on the land of Iberia by St. Nino Equal-to-the-Apostles. You were one of the youngest bishops of the Georgian Orthodox Church when you were elected Patriarch, and now you are the eldest First Hierarch in the Orthodox world. You enjoy authority with all those who know and love you, pray for you and ask your blessing.

St. Paul says: "Though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (1 Cor 4:15). You are a true spiritual father for many faithful of the Georgian Church – bishops, clerics and laypersons – and tirelessly care for the needs of your flock, inspiring it and calling upon it to live in accordance with the commandments of the Gospel.

Caring for the future of the Orthodox Georgia, you have become Godfather to the thousands of children, thus storing up "the treasure of a good foundation" (1 Tim 6:19) for future happiness of the Georgian people.

Your Holiness and Beatitude, during many decades I have had a happy opportunity for cooperation with you, including that within international inter-Christian organizations where you always maintained the positions of Orthodoxy. I highly appreciate your personal contribution to the strengthening of Orthodox unity. We worked together many times at the Conferences of the heads of representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches held in Constantinople and Chambesy, as well as at other important forums. In our common work we have always made “every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4:3).

I am deeply grateful to you for your efforts aimed at the development of fruitful cooperation between the Russian and Georgian Orthodox Churches in various spheres, such as pilgrimage, theological, academic and student exchange. You have successfully completed your education at the Moscow theological schools, have been many times a welcome guest of our Church during the time of her three primates and received many bishops and clerics of the Moscow Patriarchate in the blessed Iberia.

Your Holiness and Beatitude, you enjoy respect and love in our Church. I am sending to Georgia a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Georgy and Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas to worthily express the feelings of our hearts, brotherly love and respect. On behalf of the whole Russian Orthodox Church and on my own behalf I prayerfully wish Your Holiness and Beatitude abundant God’s help in your primatial labors, spiritual and physical strength and joy in the Lord for many good years.

With brotherly love in Christ,

+ KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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