



Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church visits Russian Ecclesiastical Mission during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land

On 16 February 2012, His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Iliya II arrived in the Holy Land to begin his pilgrimage.

Patriarch Iliya is accompanied by Metropolitan Gerasim of Zugdidi and Tsaish; Metropolitan Dimitri of Batumi and Lazeti, administrator of the Georgian parishes in North America and Canada; Metropolitan Saba of Khoni and Samtredia; and by other clergymen, representatives of science and art, benefactors, and the *choir of the Tbilisi Holy Trinity Cathedral*.

The Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church was met at the Ben Gurion airport by Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth (Jerusalem Patriarchate); archimandrite Isidor (Minayev), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem; hieromonk Antoniy (Gutnik), secretary of the Mission, and Sister Georgia (Schukina), abbess of the Gorneye Convent.

On 17 February the delegation led by His Holiness Patriarch Iliya paid a visit to His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem and All Palestine. After that the Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church venerated the Holy Sepulchre and visited the Monastery of St Symeon the Godreciever in Katamon.

On the night of 19 February the Primates of the Jerusalem and Georgian Patriarchates celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Sepulchre. Concelebrating were hierarchs and many clerics of the Orthodox Churches of Jerusalem, Russia, Georgia, and Greece.

In the evening of February 19 His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia Iliya II visited the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. He was welcomed to the Holy Trinity Cathedral by Isidor (Minayev), head of the Mission; Sister Georgia, abbess of the Gorneye Convent; clerics of the Mission, and sisters of the Gorneye Convent.

Archimandrite Isidor greeted the high guest, saying in particular: "Georgia is a very talented and beautiful country and whatever happens in the political arena, everybody knows that the Russian people love the Georgian people. All the temporary disturbances will come to an end and we will not only pray together, but also live in joy together and help each other. Christ is risen!"

His Holiness Patriarch Iliya expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and said: "Faith, culture and traditions of Orthodoxy have always united us and there is no such force which can separate us."

The Patriarch and the members of the delegation were invited to the festive dinner. Among the guests were distinguished figures of Georgia: the President of the Georgian Academy of Sciences Tamaz Gamkrelidze; film director Avtandil Varsimashvili; *singer Tamara Gverdtsiteli*; *businessman and benefactor Levan Vasadze*.

The Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church gave an interview to the Russian Orthodox TV channel "Soyuz".

During his pilgrimage His Holiness Patriarch Iliya venerated the shrines of Jerusalem, visited the Monastery of the Holy Cross and the Great Lavra of St Sabbas the Sanctified. On February 22 the Patriarch will visit Jordan, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission web-site reports.

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