



## Metropolitan Hilarion takes part in millennium celebrations in Mtskheta

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On October 14, 2010, the Day of the Holy Robe and the Life-Giving Pillar (Svetitsovloba), Orthodox Georgia celebrated the millennium of its main cathedral 'Svetitshoveli' in the old Georgian capital city of Mtskheta. At the same time, the Church celebrated the 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first church built in the place where the Robe of the Lord was buried.

In the Cathedral of the Twelve Apostles 'Svetitshoveli', which was built by King George I with the blessing of Patriarch-Catholicos Melchizedek I in the period from 1010-1029 at the place where the first Christian church was built in Georgia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Catholic-Patriarch of All Georgia. Among his concelebrants were Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania and Archbishop Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, members of the Local Orthodox Churches' delegations, and hierarchs and clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Among the concelebrants were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Metropolitan Aganfangel of Odessa and Izmail, Archbishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church. Among the worshipers was Sister Georgia, abbess of the Russian Gorneye Convent in the Holy Land.

There were also Metropolitan John of Pergamon and Metropolitan Emmanuel of France (Patriarchate of Constantinople), Bishop Nikodemos of Nitria (Patriarchate of Alexandria), Archbishop Theophanes of Gerason (Patriarchate of Jerusalem), Bishop Anthony of Moravia (Serbian Patriarchate), Metropolitan Laurentius of Transylvania (Romanian Patriarchate), Metropolitan Nicholas of Plovdiv (Bulgarian Patriarchate), Bishop Christopher of Carpathia (Church of Cyprus), Metropolitan Damaskinos of Didim (Greek Orthodox Church), Archbishop Jacob of Gdansk and Bialystok (Polish Orthodox Church), and Bishop Michael of New York (Orthodox Church in America).

With the blessing of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated Patriarch Iliya on this remarkable feast in the life of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which acquired pan-Orthodox character.

After the liturgy Patriarch Iliya addressed the congregation. He welcomed the delegations of Local Orthodox Churches and said, 'The Georgian Church does not remember to ever have such a feast – the entire world is with us today. We thank the Lord for His great mercy and grace'.

The Patriarch spoke about the great shrines – the Lord's robe and the sheepskin of the Prophet Elijah, which Georgia accepted in her time, and about Georgia as one of the appanages of the Mother of God. Speaking about the history of the Georgian Church, he said that the faith of Christ was brought to his land by Sts Andrew the First-Called and Simon the Canaanite.

'Svetitshoveli is a great candle which was enkindled by St Nina Equal-to-the-Apostles and by the holy Emperor Constantine the Great. Constantine Equal-to-the-Apostles gave to Georgia two nails with which the Lord was crucified, and today one of these nails lies on the altar during the Divine Liturgy', the Primate of the Georgian Church said.

A great many believers assembled for the celebrations. Among the worshippers were also pilgrims from Russia who were in Georgia at that time through the services of the Martha and Mary pilgrimage agency.

*DECR Communication Service*

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