



His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania falls asleep in the Lord



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On January 25, His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana, Dürres and All Albania, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Albania, passed away in the Lord this morning at the age of 95 at Evangelismos hospital in Athens, patriarchia.ru reports with reference to orthodoxalbania.org. website.

His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios (secular name Anastasios Yannoulatos) was born on November 4, 1929, into a pious Orthodox family in Greece and was actively involved in church life from childhood.

He received his high school diploma in 1947 and his Bachelor of Divinity from the Theological School of the University of Athens with the highest honors in 1952. Then he served in the military for two years and joined a religious brotherhood ZOE, which aim was the spirit renewal in Greece. Anastasios became a leader of student movements and worked in teenage camps.

This experience helped the future Primate of the Church of Albania to see the importance of missionary programs in the Church. He participated in the international youth movement Syndesmos, becoming its general secretary from 1958 to 1961 and its vice-president from 1964 to 1977.

Following his ordination to the diaconate in 1960, Yannoulatos founded the Inter-Orthodox Missionary Center 'Porefthentes.'

After his ordination to the priesthood in May 1964, he went to East Africa, where he traveled in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. However, soon he came down with malaria and had to return to Greece.

In 1965-69, he continued his post-graduate studies in the history of religion, ethnology, missions and Africanology at the Universities of Hamburg and Marburg in Germany. He worked at the University of Kampala, Uganda, to collect material for his doctoral thesis, 'The Spirits M'bandwa and the framework of their cult: a research of aspects of African religion.' Alongside with his academic work, he took an active part in the ecumenical movement.

In 1972, he became Bishop of Androussa, head of the Office of the Outreach Mission of the Church of Greece, and founded the Convent of St. John the Baptist in Kareas with the aim of participating in missionary work.

In the 1980s, the Orthodox Church in East Africa seemed to be on the verge of collapse due to internal problems that led to the defrocking of a Kenyan bishop. Patriarch Nicholas of Alexandria invited Bishop Anastasios to take on the Archdiocese of East Africa. The bishop consented, but continued to keep his responsibilities at the University of Athens.

His main priority in Africa was to create a strong Orthodox community led by local leaders. His first action was to immediately re-open a seminary in Nairobi that Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus had founded ten years earlier, but it remained incomplete. Along with training and establishing indigenous leaders, Bishop Anastasios organized the translation of divine services into seven different languages. He guided the construction of sixty-seven new church buildings and helped renovate twenty-five existing ones. His constructive accomplishments included primary and nursery schools, mission and health stations.

As a result of his zealous work and education of local ardent followers of Orthodoxy, the Church of East Africa continued to mature even after his departure in 1991.

In January 1991, the Patriarch of Constantinople appointed him to be the Patriarchal Exarch for the

restoration from ruins of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania which had been completely devastated after over forty years of severe persecution. There were only twenty-two clergymen, while in 1940 they numbered four hundred and forty.

His Beatitude Anastasios was elected the fourth Primate of the Orthodox Church of Albania on 24 June 1992 and enthroned on 2 August 1992.

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