



## Primate of Georgian Orthodox Church passed away to the Lord



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On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2026, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, passed away to the Lord at the age of 93.

Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia (secular name Irakli Gudushauri-Shiolashvili) was born in Vladikavkaz on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1933. Having entered the Moscow Theological Seminary in 1952, he graduated from it in 1956 and continued his education at the Moscow Theological Academy.

On 16<sup>th</sup> April 1957, with the blessing of Catholicos-Patriarch Melchizedek III, Irakli Gudushauri-Shiolashvili, back then sophomore of the Moscow Theological Academy, was tonsured with the name

Ilia, in honour of the Holy Prophet Elijah, in the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky in Tbilisi. Performing the tonsure was the Venerable Zinovy (Mazhuga), future Metropolitan of Tetrtskaro. Two days later, Catholicos-Patriarch Melchizedek ordained him hierodeacon in the Sioni Cathedral of the Holy Dormition in Tbilisi.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 1959, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Rus' ordained him hieromonk.

In 1960, the future Catholicos-Patriarch graduated from the Moscow Theological Academy and was awarded the degree of the Candidate of Theology.

Upon his return to the homeland, he was appointed a cleric of the Batumi cathedral. In 1961, he was elevated to the rank of hegumen, and later to the rank of archimandrite.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1963, Archimandrite Ilia was consecrated as Bishop of Shemokmedi, vicar of Catholicos-Patriarch Ephraim II.

From 1963 to 1972, Bishop Ilia served as rector of the Mtskheta Theological Seminary, at the time the only theological school in Georgia. In 1967, he was transferred to the See of Abkhazia, and in 1969 elevated to the rank of metropolitan.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1977, he was elected Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. His enthronement took place on 25<sup>th</sup> December that year.

For almost half a century, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II performed his Primatial service in the land of the ancient Iberia, working tirelessly to ensure spiritual growth of his flock, restoration of ancient churches and construction of new ones, and devoting special attention to developing Orthodox theological education. His tireless work earned him love and respect in Georgia and throughout the Orthodox world.

Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II participated in many international events organized in cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church. He visited the Moscow Patriarchate on repeated occasions, for example, to take part in the celebrations in Moscow in 1988 that marked the Millennium of the Baptism of Russia and to participate in the great consecration of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in 2000.

Memory eternal to the departed Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia of All Georgia!

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