DECR chairman expresses condolences over the passing of the Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church



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Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, sent condolences to His Eminence Shio, Metropolitan of Senaki and Chkhorotsku, Locum Tenens of the Patriarchal Throne of Georgia, over the death of His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. The text of the letter is given below.

Your Eminence, dear Vladyka!

It has grieved me to learn of the passing of His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. I extend my deep condolences to you and brothers the archpastors of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

The esteemed elder, *full of days* (Job 42:17), who is now called by God to the eternal mansions, will stand before Him as a tireless intercessor who led his flock in the ways of the Gospel of Christ during his

long earthly journey.

The departed Primate was a man of lofty wisdom and ardent *zeal for God* (cf. Num 25:13), which are the qualities worthy of his heavenly patron, the Holy Prophet Elijah. His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia was the true spiritual father for his large flock, whose burdens he bore unto his last breath and love for whom always lived in his big archpastoral heart.

In times of oppression against religion, he set an example by his loyalty to *the living God* (Heb 9:14), and *in an acceptable time* (Is 49:8), he worked selflessly towards the revival of church life, reopening theological schools in his homeland and adorning it with great many churches and monasteries.

Being one the oldest among the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia enjoyed special authority in the Orthodox world. From the years of his studies at the Moscow Theological Academy, His Holiness and Beatitude had sincere love, which *never faileth* (1 Cor 13:8), for the Russian Orthodox Church. Until the end of his earthly life, he remained a dear friend of our Church.

May our Lord and God Jesus Christ, *the Lord both of the dead and living* (Rom 14:9), *the resurrection, and the life* (Jn 11:25), grant rest to the soul of His departed servant in *the tabernacles of the righteous* and make his memory eternal.

With brotherly love in Christ,

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk

Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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