THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate's Delegation Attends Celebrations Marking Enthronement of New Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia



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On 16th May 2026, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church arrived in Tbilisi to attend celebrations marking the enthronement of the newly elected Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Shio III. The delegation included Metropolitan Ambrose of Tver and Kashin and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Meeting the delegation at the Tbilisi airport was Bishop Vakhtang of Nikortsminda.

On 17th May, the members of the Russian Church's delegation prayed at the Divine Liturgy, which His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Shio III of All Georgia and His Beatitude Metropolitan Rostislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia celebrated at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Tbilisi. Among the Primates' concelebrants were hierarchs and clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church and representatives of other Local Orthodox Churches who had arrived in Tbilisi to take part in the celebrations.

Attending the divine service were the Georgian leaders – President Mikheil Kavelashvili, Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze and Chairman of the Parliament Shalva Papuashvili.

The celebrations coincided with the Day of Family Sanctity, established as a public holiday on the initiative of His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II. On that day, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated early in the morning in all Tbilisi churches, followed by a thousands-strong procession to the Holy Trinity Cathedral, where a festive prayer service took place.

After the service, Catholicos-Patriarch Shio III of All Georgia delivered a homily, in which he called on people to join efforts to protect the institution of family in Georgia.

"May the Lord grant us His grace to contribute through our work to the protection of the family and family values, so that we may have such legislation that will protect the family and our nation from harmful gender theories and ideology. Contrary to what some are calling us to do, we should not reject this legislation, but should reinforce it as a means of safeguarding and upholding the family. This is a pledge of our country's survival and growth, as well as of God's mercy," the Patriarch said.

The President, the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia also addressed all those present, mentioning in their speeches the unifying role of the Church in upholding moral, including family, values in the Georgian society. They also pointed out that the celebration of the Family Sanctity Day served as an indication of the Orthodox Christian identity of the Georgian people, which needs to be protected and strengthened for the sake of peace and welfare of Georgia.

Later that day, Metropolitan Ambrose and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk visited the ancient Sioni Cathedral in Tbilisi. There, they celebrated a litiya for His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II of All Georgia at his tomb and venerated a great shrine of the Georgian Orthodox Church – Saint Nino's cross.

In the evening, the Russian Church's delegation attended an official reception marking the enthronement of His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch Shio III of All Georgia. Present there were the Primate and hierarchs of the Georgian Patriarchate, delegations of the Local Orthodox Churches, Georgian leaders and representatives of non-Orthodox Christian confessions and religious

associations.

Metropolitan Ambrose of Tver and Kashin conveyed to the newly elected Primate of the Georgian Orthodox Church heartfelt greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'.

In his address, Metropolitan Ambrose pointed out that the year, in which the Throne of the Georgian Orthodox Church adorned itself with the new Primate, also marked the 1700th anniversary of the proclamation of Christianity as Georgia's official religion. His Eminence also noted that the new Georgian Patriarch was to continue and develop numerous initiatives of the ever-memorable Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II, aimed, in particular, at upholding family and other moral values. "Throughout Tbilisi we have seen vivid and living signs that the word of the Gospel bears fruit and multiplies in the domain of the Most Holy Theotokos – serving as these signs are radiant inspired faces of great many worshippers, including young people and children, and truly nation-wide celebration of the Family Sanctity Day," Metropolitan Ambrose said. He wished to His Holiness and Beatitude Shio strength and help from above and assured him that in his Primatial ministry he would always receive warm prayerful support from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Then, Metropolitan Ambrose presented to Patriarch Shio memorable gifts.

Among the speakers were also President of Georgia Mikheil Kavelashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia Irakli Kobakhidze, representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and other guests.

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