



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Congratulatory message of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to Primate of Georgian Orthodox Church on his 80th birthday and 35th anniversary of enthronement

The message was read out by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Tbilisi.

HIS HOLINESS AND BEATITUDE ILIYA II

CATHOLICOS-PATRIARCH OF ALL GEORGIA

Your Holiness and Beatitude,

beloved brother in the Lord and Concelebrant:

I am sincerely happy to greet you with two remarkable dates: your 80th birthday and the 35th anniversary of Your enthronement as Patriarch.

From your youth you have devoted your life to the Church and have served her during many years. You have gained rich spiritual experience and archpastoral wisdom due to your resolute choice of the course of life and faithful ministry. Your reward is in the gifts of the Spirit bestowed on you here on earth according to your deserts of a true servant of Christ. These gifts are an invaluable treasure with which you tirelessly endow your flock and the plenitude of universal Orthodoxy according to the Gospel words: 'No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house' (Mt 5:15).

You have witnessed many radical historical changes. Your Patriarchal ministry has been a special epoch in the life of the Georgian Church and also in relations between our Sister-Churches. Thanks largely to your personal qualities, these sincere and warm relations have been maintained in the spirit of Christ's love.

During the years passed since your enthronement, the ancient Georgian Church has become even stronger in faith and piety, the number of her laymen and clergymen has increased many times, and plenty of churches and monasteries are flourishing. Your flock loves and respects you; your steadfast faith and tireless labours have gained you glory in the entire Orthodox world, and I render homage to

your great merits in service to God and the people of God, recalling the words of the Wise: 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life' (Prov 11:30).

I prayerfully wish strength and God's help to Your Holiness and Beatitude in your noble ministry, and spiritual growth in faith and love in Christ to your pious flock.

With brotherly love in the Lord,

+ KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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