

Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate

**Metropolitan Tikhon
Irenic Visit to Orthodox Church of Georgia, April 25-28, 2015**

**Sunday April 26: Patriarchal Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity Cathedral,
Tbilisi
The Myrrhbearing women and the Holy Georgian Queen Tamara (12th c)**



P.O. Box 675
Syosset, NY 11791-0675
Tel: 516-922-0550
Fax: 516-922-0954
Website: www.oca.org

Your Holiness,

Christ is risen!

It is with deep gratitude to God and with the joy of the resurrection that I greet you today on behalf of the bishops, clergy, monastics and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America and thank you for your invitation to visit the Church of Georgia for the first time and see even a glimpse of its resurrected life of this venerable Church with my own eyes.

I am grateful for the warm welcome, kindness and hospitality you and your Church have given me and my delegation.

I am grateful for the welcome too that you have always given our Church and my predecessors.

I am grateful for the warm memories of your visit in 1998 to the Monastery of St. Tikhon in Pennsylvania, where I lived for 18 years as a monastic.

And I am grateful, humbled and inspired by the martyric witness of your Church for two thousand years. The scale of that witness is staggering, as time and again throughout the centuries and into our own lifetimes Georgian faith in Christ, His Cross and His resurrection has been tested again and again. Just last night I walked with Metropolitan Gerasime and others along the Metekhi Bridge, where 100,000 Georgians were put to death in the 13th century for refusing to abandon their faith in Christ.

Like the Myrrhbearing women, the Christians of Georgia served Christ even when their earthly hope was gone. And like St. Tamara, the holy Queen of Georgia, who poured herself out for her people, generations of bishops, clergy and faithful men and women have poured out their own lives in service to Christ in order to care for the Church and deliver her to the next generation.

Your people have been killed and your churches destroyed but faith in Christ, the rock, remains, as we are reminded of in the Holy Gospel: “And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.” (Mt. 7:25).

The Orthodox Church in America is a young church, but we reflect the ethnic variety of the United States, Canada and Mexico. People of all ethnic backgrounds worship in our churches. We have parishioners throughout our 700 small parishes whose roots are in Orthodox immigrant communities of Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Albanian and

and Georgian backgrounds. But many more of our faithful are converts to the Orthodox faith from other ethnic and religious backgrounds with no connection to Orthodoxy. They—like me—have discovered the life in Christ that you in the Orthodox Church of Georgia have known and have preserved and passed on for many centuries.

We are a missionary church seeking to bring the light of Orthodoxy to those who have yet to know Christ in North America. We ask Your Holiness and all your bishops, clergy, monastics and faithful to pray for us. As a small expression of our gratitude, we present to you these small gifts on behalf of our Church:

A panagia, to remind Your Holiness of our visit and of our common veneration and love for the Mother of God,

An illustrated book of the Gospel of Matthew, to express our common desire to share the life-giving good news of Jesus Christ to the world,

And a print of the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael in Sitka, Alaska, one of the oldest churches of North America, as a sign of our universal dedication to the missionary efforts undertaken by our two Churches, beginning with the Apostle Andrew and St. Nino in your land and St. Herman in ours. May their prayers and labors continue to inspire all of us for many years.