

tarian essence of Soviet legislation which protects children's interests and the right of children to spiritual freedom.

An outstanding proof of the victory of truly democratic Soviet principles relating to freedom of conscience is found in the normal relationship which has

evolved between the Church and the State in the USSR. Believers and members of the clergy are not only loyal to the Soviet State, but they actively support its internal and foreign policies, and have given warm approval to the new Soviet Constitution which guarantees freedom of conscience.

The New Georgian Patriarch

On 9 November 1977 the Patriarch of Georgia, David V, died. There had been considerable controversy over his appointment in suspicious circumstances as Patriarch after the death of Efreim II in 1972. A movement for reform within the Georgian Orthodox Church developed in reaction to evidence of corruption within the Church (see RCL Vol. 3, Nos. 4-5, pp. 14-23 and No. 6, pp. 45-54). The election of Metropolitan Ilya Shiolashvili in December 1977 as the new Patriarch and Catholicos, is felt to be a positive sign and has been greeted with much rejoicing by the Georgian faithful. The improvement in the atmosphere of some of Georgia's churches is evident even to tourists, reported a recent visitor. We print below a short biographical document about the new Patriarch, which was sent to the West earlier this year.

His Holiness and Beatitude Ilya II, Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia (whose secular name is Irakli Shiolashvili) was born in 1933, in Ordzhonikidze. His parents were believers: his father, Georgi Shiolashvili, was born in the village of Sno, Kazbegsky region (Georgia) and his mother, Natalia Kobaidze, was born in the village of Sioni in the same region.

He was baptized in Ordzhonikidze in a Georgian church, which was under the jurisdiction of the Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia. The baptism was conducted by Archimandrite Tarasy (Kandelaki), the former secretary of the then Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia. Later Archimandrite Tarasy became the Bishop of Tsilkani and was buried in the graveyard of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. Mother Zolle Dvalishvili, the former Mother Superior of Bedia Monastery, and later Mother Superior of

Samtavro nunnery in Mtskheta, helped at the baptism.

He was brought up in the spirit of true Christian piety, and from early childhood was eager to serve the Lord. After finishing at secondary school he entered the Moscow Theological Seminary in 1952, and after graduating in 1956 he was accepted at the Academy. From here he graduated in 1960 as one of the Academy's best students.

On 16 April 1957, with the blessing of his Holiness and Beatitude Melkhisiedek III, who was then the Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia, he took his monastic vows in Tbilisi under the name of the Prophet Elijah (Ilya).

On 18 April 1957, in the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral, he was ordained hierodeacon by His Holiness and Beatitude Melkhisiedek III, Patriarch of All Georgia.

Then on 10 May 1959, Hierodeacon Ilya was ordained hiero-monk with the blessing of His Holiness Aleksii, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, in the Dormition Cathedral of the Trinity-St Sergius Monastery.

As a fourth year student of the Academy, Hiero-monk Ilya was given the degree of Candidate of Theology for his thesis, "The History of the Iberian Monastery of Mount Athos." By a decision of the Academy's Council, he was made a professor-scholar at the Academy.

But he was eager to serve the Holy Georgian Church and the Georgian people, and therefore returned to Georgia where His Holiness and Beatitude Efreim II, Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia, appointed him as a priest at the Batumi Cathedral.

On 19 December 1960, he was ordained Father Superior, and a year later he was raised to the rank of archimandrite.

On 25 August 1963, His Holiness and Beatitude Efreim II, Catholicos and Pat-

riarch, and the assembly of Georgian Orthodox hierarchs nominated him as Bishop of Shemokmedy and appointed him Vicar to His Holiness.

On 1 September 1967, he was appointed Bishop of Sukhumi and All Abkhazia, and in 1967 he was elevated to the dignity of Metropolitan.

While Rector of the theological seminary in Mtskheta he organized the training and education of the clergy for the Holy Georgian Church. In 1972 he left this appointment at his own request.

During all these years he took part in much inter-church activity with the blessing of the Patriarch of Georgia, participating in many forums for the strengthening of world peace. With this aim he visited Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Holland,

Greece, Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, USA, Hungary and West Berlin as a delegate of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

After the death of His Holiness and Beatitude David V, Catholicos and Patriarch of Georgia, on 9 November 1977, he was appointed Patriarchal *Locum Tenens* of the Georgian Orthodox Church by a decision of the Holy Synod.

The XII Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church, held in Tbilisi on 23 December 1977, in the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral, unanimously elected him as His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia.

On 25 December 1977, in Svetitskhoveli Patriarchal Cathedral in Mtskheta – the ancient capital of Georgia – the ceremony of enthronization was held.

Georgian Patriarch Enthroned

After the election of the new Georgian Patriarch on 23 December 1977, Ilya II was enthroned two days later during an impressive service at the Svetitskhoveli Patriarchal Cathedral in Mtskheta. The following document, issued by the Patriarch's secretary, describes these events.

On 18 December 1977 forty days had passed since the Holy decease of His Holiness and Beatitude David V, Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia. On 23 December 1977 the XII Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church elected its new Catholicos and Patriarch. [...] On the morning of 23 December 1977, His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia and other guests were received by His Eminence Metropolitan Ilya, the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, in the Sion Patriarchal Cathedral. They were met at the entrance of the cathedral by Bishop Grigori of Alaverdi and four priests. His Holiness Patriarch Pimen and other guests then proceeded to the altar where they were welcomed by the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens* and other hierarchs of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Bowing to the Holy Throne, His Holiness Patriarch Pimen prayed ardently to St Nina, who is equal to the apostles, the enlightener of Georgia [. . .] Following His Holiness, the other guests prayed and kissed the Holy

Cross of St Nina. Then the Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, Metropolitan Ilya, invited His Holiness Patriarch Pimen and other hierarchs to take their seats in Presidium. The other members of the XII Council also took their seats.

At 12 a.m. a solemn *moleben* (service of intercession) began, conducted by Bishop Grigori of Alaverdi, four servers and two archdeacons. The Sion Patriarchal Cathedral resounded with the thrice-repeated cry to God, "Glory be to Thee, O Lord, glory to Thee," followed by the humble, thrice-repeated prayer to the Virgin Mary, "Most Blessed and Glorious Lady, Mary ever-Virgin and Mother of God, have mercy upon us". The Holy Gospel according to St Matthew (Chap. 7:7) was then read. In this passage our Lord promises to send His blessing on all zealous people who ask for His grace: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you". Once again the thrice-repeated cry to God thundered out in everlasting gratitude, followed by the prayer to the Virgin Mary.

After the *moleben* had ended everyone waited in excitement for the opening of the XII Council. The Patriarchal *Locum Tenens*, His Eminence Metropolitan Ilya of Sukhumi and All Abkhazia, declared the XII Council of the Georgian Orthodox Church open and