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A theological conference on a global luminary: Archbishop Anastasios of Albania (1929–2025)



An International Event with Wider Ramifications

The Huffington Ecumenical Institute at Hellenic College Holy Cross, in collaboration with the Missions Institute of Orthodox Christianity (also under the auspices of HCHC), is organizing an international conference on the life and legacy of the late Archbishop Anastasios of Albania, a contemporary religious leader, who advocated for interfaith understanding, evangelical outreach, and ecumenical reconciliation.

“Anastasios: Archbishop, Theologian, Missionary” will he held from March 2nd to March 4th, 2026, at the MaliotisCultural Center of Hellenic College. The program will feature prominent hierarchs and distinguished scholars from the United States, Africa, and Europe, including Archbishop Joani of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, Archbishop Demetrios formerly of America, Metropolitan Ignatios of Demetrias, and Bishop Neofitos of Eldoret and Northern Kenya, as well as speakers from the University of Thessaloniki, the Volos Academy of Theological Studies, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and Boston College, as well as St. Tikhon’s Theological Seminary and Holy Cross School of Theology.

Moreover, presentations will be offered by Orthodox clergy and laity with experience in missionary outreach, in Albania and Africa, along with theologians with leadership positions in the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches.

The highlight of the conference will undoubtedly be the keynote address delivered by His Beatitude Archbishop Joani of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, who is a graduate of Holy Cross School of Theology and coming to the United States for the first time as the Primate of an Autocephalous Orthodox Church exclusively for the memorial tribute to his spiritual mentor and immediate predecessor. Beyond officially opening and attending the entire conference, Archbishop Joani's visit to Boston will provide an opportunity for a number of significant events, such as a Pan-Orthodox Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy (to be celebrated and livestreamed at St. Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Braintree, MA) and pastoral meetings with local communities and regional parishioners.

An Unprecedented Ministry and Unparalleled Mission

Who was Archbishop Anastasios [Yannoulatos]? I certainly cherish countless memories of him as my undergraduate professor and long-time advisor for the charisma of his demeanor, the softness of his tone, the twinkle in his eye, the acuteness of his wit, the breadth of his vision, his keen capacity to listen, and the warmth of his compassion. He died at the age of 95 and is now laid to rest in the crypt of the magnificent Orthodox Cathedral of the Resurrection in the Albanian capital of Tirana, a striking symbol of the revival of the Orthodox Church spearheaded by him after decades of totalitarian atheistic rule under communism.

He was nothing less than a trailblazer. As professor of religion, he taught courses on the influence and rise of Islam at a time (as far back as the mid-1970s!) when hardly anyone was interested, let alone informed of, its emergence as a global reality and force. As a missionary, few others could serve as selflessly in Africa; and none could assume leadership of the Church inAlbania, which had been decimated by oppression and persecution. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there are few, if any religious leaders—inside and outside the Orthodox Church—who stand above the rest like Archbishop Anastasios of Albania.

In Greece, he was a charismatic professor of comparative religion (1972–1997) at the University of Athens. His academic résumé contains around 400 studies, including at least fifteen books and countless articles, published in international and scholarly journals, in many languages.

In Africa, over the period of a decade (1981–1991), he oversaw the construction of dozens of churches and schools, hospital clinics and youth camps, as well as educational institutions and welfare programs. He ordained over sixty priests andtonsured forty readers.

And in Albania (1992–2025), following the collapse of the final bastion of communism, he inspired and inaugurated a dizzying program of reconstruction to revive Orthodox Christianity by establishing a holy synod, a new constitution and seminary, building and renovating hundreds of churches, schools and monasteries, a printing press, a medical center, an institute for vocational training, and a radio station.

But Archbishop Anastasios was also deeply involved in the ecumenical movement—a bold and rare enterprise for any Orthodox theologian in this critical and conservative time—serving as member of the International Commission for Missionary Studies at the World Council of Churches, moderator of the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Central Committee, and the WCC Presidium.

For Anastasios, every moment was an invitation and opportunity to evangelize. I still recall the window in his office, described by Nicholas Gage in the Parade Magazine of the Sunday World Herald (Atlanta, July 27, 2003): "A bullet is suspended in the window of the spartan Tirana office of Archbishop Anastasios, head of the Orthodox Church of Albania—stopped in its flight toward him by the double-glazed pane. It came from a sniper in the 1997 political upheaval that pushed Albania into chaos and almost claimed the archbishop's life. 'I keep it there,' Anastasios would say, 'to remind me that life is so fragile. We cannot waste a single day'."

For further information on the conference, see: https://huffingtoninstitute.hchc.edu/event/anastasios-missionary-theologian-archbishop/
For the livestream of the conference, see:

For the livestream of the Pan-Orthodox Liturgy, see: https://www.youtube.com/@saintcatherinebraintree5731

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