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Patriarch Ilia of Georgia receives honorary doctorate from Tbilisi Theological Academy



His Holiness Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II, the most beloved and trusted man in the Caucasian country, was the guest of honor at an event of the Tbilisi Theological Academy and Seminary yesterday.

In the courtyard of the Georgian Patriarchate, the school conferred the title of Doctor Honoris Causa upon His Holiness, who has led the Georgian Church for more than 40 years, reports the press service of the Tbilisi Academy.

The event was attended by several hierarchs of the Georgian Church, including His Eminence Metropolitan Shio of Senaki and Chkhorotsqu, the Locum Tenens of the

Patriarchal throne, several state authorities, including President Salome Zurbashvili, and representatives of the academic community.

The ceremony was opened by the rector of the Academy and Seminary, Protopresbyter George Zviadadze, who noted that Pat. Ilia's contribution to the Church and nation is of epochal significance. From the moment of his enthronement as Patriarch in 1977, he set out to achieve the recognition of the ancient autocephaly of the Georgian Church, which the Patriarchate of Constantinople finally did in 1990. He is also the founder of the Tbilisi Theological Academy, which has contributed greatly to the revival and development of theology in Georgia, and served as rector of the school for many years.

With the Patriarch's influence and authority, the Academy established a dissertation council on Orthodox theology and signed cooperation agreements with various leading educational institutions from around the globe.

"By conferring the title of honorary doctor to the Catholicos-Patriarch, the Tbilisi theological Academy and Seminary expresses its heartfelt gratitude and respect for his immeasurable contribution," the Academy writes.

According to the text of the honorary diploma, His Holiness was also honored for the rebirth of the Georgian Church and the unification and spiritual strengthening of the Georgian nation.

Several of the Church and state representatives present then addressed the Patriarch, expressing their gratitude for his tireless work for the Georgian Church and state. Noting the revival of many churches and monasteries under his primacy, President Zurbashvili stated: "I believe that you are a great personality of our era and I am happy to have the honor to be the President of Georgia during your activity."

When His Holiness ascended the Patriarchal throne, there were 30 active churches in 15 dioceses throughout the nation; today there are 47 dioceses and about 2,000 churches.

In his own presentation, Pat. Ilia stated: "I have served the Georgian Church all my life. I thank the Lord for the mission entrusted to me. The main goal of my activity and spiritual work has been the unity of the Georgian nation and our state. The unity of academia and spirituality is the main goal, and it is in this unity that our people draw strength. Thank you all for conferring this title. Be happy, for God is with us!"

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