SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Sommario:

♦ Messaggio del Santo Padre Leone XIV per la scomparsa di Sua Santità e Beatitudine Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarca di tutta la Georgia, Arcivescovo di Mtskheta-Tbilisi e Metropolita di Abkhazia e Bichvinta

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Pubblichiamo di seguito il Messaggio che il Santo Padre Leone XIV invia per la scomparsa di Sua Santità e Beatitudine Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarca di tutta la Georgia, Arcivescovo di Mtskheta-Tbilisi e Metropolita di Abkhazia e Bichvinta:

Messaggio del Santo Padre

To His Eminence Shio

Metropolitan of Senaki and Chkhorotsku

Locum Tenens of the of the Patriarchal See

Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Georgia

It is with deep sadness that I learned of the death of His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. In sending my heartfelt condolences I assure Your Eminence, the Holy Synod, and the entire Orthodox Church of Georgia of my fraternal solidarity in your grief. At this delicate moment for your people, I join you in

prayer and in your grateful remembrance of the Shepherd and Father who guided you with kindness, wisdom and evangelical strength for so many years.

Throughout his long life, Patriarch Ilia II was a devoted witness to faith in the Risen Christ. His ministry accompanied the Georgian people through difficult times and profound epochal change, lovingly preserving tradition and opening hearts and communities to hope.

I would also recall his deep passion for music, which is a stimulus to the search for the beauty of God and can unite peoples, bringing Churches closer together beyond cultural and theological differences.

For many, he was a spiritual father, a voice of reconciliation and a tireless builder of unity. He met with two of my esteemed predecessors — Saint John Paul II and Pope Francis — always in a spirit of cordiality and fraternity.

As you entrust this faithful servant to the Lord, the words of the Apostle Paul resound powerfully, reminding us that the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of our faith and the source of our hope. For if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is in vain (cf. *1 Cor* 15:14). Faced with the death of a Shepherd, therefore, our hearts do not yield to despair. Instead, they are opened to the certainty that life is not taken away but transformed.

With these sentiments, I express to Your Eminence my fraternal closeness as you bear the weight of the ministry of *Locum Tenens*. I pray that the Lord will grant you light, discernment and fortitude, so that you may accompany the Orthodox Church of Georgia with that same pastoral charity which animated the late Patriarch. I ask the Most Holy Mother of God to protect Your Eminence, the Holy Synod, and the entire Georgian people with her mantle of consolation and love.

From the Vatican, 18 March 2026

LEO PP. XIV

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