

The Consecration of His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania

THE Holy Synod in Resistance of the Orthodox Church of Greece, at its thirty-second session on 5 November 2005 (Old Style), at



the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, under the Presidency of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, in implementation of a mandate from the Hierarchy (issued at its thirty-first session [4 October 2005]), decided, by Synodal Decree VII, to establish the Holy Diocese of Alania, subject to, and dependent on, the

Holy Synod. The borders of the new Diocese are identical to those of the Republic of South Ossetia, in the Caucasus, and its headquarters are the capital, Tskhinvali.

The Holy Synod next decided to appoint the Very Rev. Archimandrite George (Pukhaev), hitherto the Episcopal Representative for this ecclesiastical province, first Bishop of the newly-established Diocese.

It should be noted that the appellation of this Diocese is the ancient, luminous, and historical name of the Eparchy of Alania and Ossetia, which is known from the Byzantine era.

• **The Consecration** of His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania was celebrated on Sunday, 7 November 2005 (Old Style) at the Holy Monastery of Sts.



Cyprian and Justina by His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oro-

pos and Fili, President of the Holy Synod, assisted by His Eminence, Bishop Chrysostomos of Sydney and New South Wales and Their Graces, Bishop Chrysostomos of Christianoupolis and Bishop Ambrose of Methone, by the unanimous consent of all of the members of the Holy Synod.



Also taking part in the Divine Liturgy were clergy from the Monastery, as well as Father Jeremias Cvak, a Priest of our Holy Synod from the Czech Republic, who was visiting the Monastery.

The Consecration was celebrated with solemnity and compunction, with the presence and participation of a large crowd of the faithful, who expressed their spiritual satisfaction and gladness over this remarkable event with one mouth and one heart by the acclamation, “Αξιτος!” (“He is worthy!”).



It would perhaps be an oversight were we not to note that this very important Consecration coincided with the first Sunday in November (Old Style). On this Sunday, the *Synaxis* of the Three New Hierarchs—St. Photios the Great, St. Gregory Palamas, and St. Mark of Ephesus—was celebrated for the first time. Following a Synodal resolution, these Saints have been proclaimed special Patrons of the sacred struggle of the Orthodox resistance against the contemporary Western challenge of syncretistic ecumenism, to be honored as such with a common Service.

It was truly a twofold celebration!

• **His Eminence**, Bishop George of Alania, in the world Alexander Alexandrovich Pukhaev, was born in Russia, in February of

1973. His father, of Ossetian descent, is now a monk, with the name of Christopher; his mother, who was of Russian and German ancestry, reposed when he was only three years old.

Bishop George was raised in Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, by his pious grandmother, in keeping with the traditional principles of the Faith, in spite of the fact that atheism still prevailed in the Soviet Union and that there was neither a clergyman nor a functioning Church in that region.

In 1990, His Eminence entered the Technical Institute of South Ossetia—later, the University of Tskhinvali—studying in the Faculty of Chemistry and Biology and graduating in 1996 with a major in Biochemistry.

Already in 1992, however, Bishop George had been Ordained a Deacon and an (unmarried) Presbyter by the late Archbishop Lazar (Zurbenko) of Odessa and Tambov, a Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad within Russia, with a view toward working for the restoration of Church life (which had, for decades, been forcibly discontinued) in his own



hometown during the difficult transitional period after the fall of Communism and the emergence, *inter alia*, of the newly-established Republic of South Ossetia.

Although he faced terribly adverse conditions (war, poverty, and a variety of other difficulties), he succeeded, with zeal and struggle, by God's Grace, in resurrecting Church life according to canonical order, throwing himself into the work of genuine evangelism through catechesis, Baptisms, the renewal of ancient and demolished Churches, the preparation of fellow workers and future clergy, and so on.

From 1996 through 2003, he taught high school classes in Orthodox religious education, a task which is now being continued by another clergyman.



During the year 2000, Father Alexander Puchaev, who had until then been a Presbyter, received the monastic tonsure from his Elder, Archbishop Lazar, being renamed George, and was awarded the dignity of “Igumen.” The region of South Ossetia, with the increase in the number of its clergy, now formed a special ecclesiastical province.

During this period, owing to the confusion and division that broke out in the ranks of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and those within Russia who belonged to it, the Province of South Ossetia remained essentially without Hierarchical supervision, and thus the search for another True Orthodox jurisdiction began.

Through a Priest in the same region, Father Alexey Aristinov, who is of Greek descent, Father George became acquainted with the Holy Synod in Resistance. Eventually, in January of 2003, he submitted a petition to join the Holy Synod, which petition was accepted.

That same year, this ecclesiastical province was organized as the “Orthodox Eparchy of Alania,” and in November of 2003, Father George, while visiting Greece, received the dignity of Archimandrite from His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian and was appointed Episcopal Representative for the Eparchy.

It is worth noting that Father George has been decorated three times by the government of South Ossetia—and also by Russia—for his self-sacrifice and self-denial in serving his people.

During the three years that the Eparchy of Alania belonged to the Holy Synod in Resistance, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone visited the region three times as the official representative of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian. His Grace determined, from first-hand observation, the immediate need for the Eparchy to be better organized through the elevation of its founder, Father George, to the rank of Bishop—something that has finally been realized.

• **His Eminence**, Bishop George of Alania, though young in age, is distinguished for his godly zeal, experience, understanding, discernment, and knowledge, as well as for his deep faith and hope in God and, above all, his missionary spirit. All of these traits and spiritual gifts guarantee that he will exercise a God-pleasing ministry and provide an Orthodox witness and confession in a region that is beleaguered, war-torn, and plagued by ethnic and ecclesiastical strife and disputes.

Our prayers must and will uphold him!

Consecration Address of His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania

“To all things there is a time, and a season for every matter under Heaven:

a time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what has been planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to pull down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh;

a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw stones, and a time to gather stones together.”

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-5).

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian,
Holy Hierarchs,
Reverend Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters:



“Christ is all and in all,” according to the Apostle Paul!

It is now the second millennium since our ancestors, the Scythians and Sarmatians, received the Gospel of Christ from the Apostle Andrew the First-called and the Apostle Matthew. Their spiritual work

constituted the glorious Churches of the Scythians and the Sarmatians, which produced a multitude of Saints honored by the Orthodox Church.

Our forefathers, who received the Light of Christ, bequeathed the Orthodox Faith to their descendants, the Alanians and the Ossetians. The glorious Kingdom of Alania was for many centuries an ally of Byzantium, as early as the era of Emperor Justinian the Great, and often rushed to the aid of the Orthodox Byzantines during their difficult ordeals on the part of the Normans, the Seljuks, the Latins, and the Turks; and finally, it suffered the same fate as Byzantium.

The Kingdom of Alania, in the Caucasus, extending from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea and from the south of Russia to Georgia, had the same borders as the Metropolis of Alania. This Metropolis was an illustrious one and was, in fact, among the Orthodox Patriarchates and Metropolises that signed the document authorizing the elevation of the Russian Church to a Patriarchate. The signature of the last Metropolitan of Alania, Pachomios, is still extant.

After the dreadful disturbances and incursions of the Tatars, Tamberlaine, the Turks, and the Persians, the Kingdom of Alania finally fell, and its Metropolis ceased to exist. However, faith in Christ did not disappear during this period. The Alanians and Ossetians, hiding in the “caves of the earth” in the mountains of the Central Caucasus, preserved the Faith of their Fathers, even in the absence of spiritual guides or clergy.

Through the mercy of God, Orthodox Russia aided its Alanian and Ossetian co-religionists in acquiring their own national Church and drawing the people to Orthodoxy.

However, there followed the notoriously difficult years of the Revolution, the civil war, Communism, and warfare against God, and all the peoples of the former Russian Empire fell into the darkness of atheism.

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalm 13:1, *Septuaginta*).

And this folly devastated the spiritual substance of the Alanian and Ossetian peoples. The clergy were liquidated, the Churches and monasteries were destroyed, and—what was the greatest evil—the souls of many generations of the people were poisoned. We are

reaping the fruits of such folly to this day throughout Russia and especially in the Caucasus, where blood is flowing at this very moment!

The dearth of spirituality poisons men's souls and yields fruits of iniquity, with the re-



sultant affliction and sorrow. My people live with the words of the Prophet-King David: "Rescue me from mine enemies, O God, and from them that rise up against me redeem me. Deliver me from them that work iniquity" (Psalm 58:2-3, *Septuaginta*).

In the afflictions and sorrows that have befallen us, our souls and our hearts have begun to seek Him without Whom peace and consolation cannot exist, that is, God, Who saved our fathers, guided them, and upheld them.

Amid the torments of wars, sufferings, and privations, I, too, began, when I was nineteen years old, to search for a Shepherd who would desire to help my people.

"To all things there is a time and a season..." (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

And so it was that, in 1992, the now departed Archbishop Lazar (Zurbenko), of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, took on himself the pain of my people as his own and put forth many efforts to regenerate spiritual life for those who desired their salvation in Orthodoxy. In this way, the first Church communities in much-suffering South Ossetia were created.

"Our God is refuge and strength, a helper in afflictions which heavily befall us. Therefore shall we not fear," the Psalmist David comforts us; and thus, many have begun to seek consolation in Christ, Who is our refuge and strength.

Alas, however, the enemy does not sleep, and the serious problems that beset the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to this day, and her internal schism in Russia, compelled us to seek a Hierarchy

under whose *Omophorion* we would be able to labor in the field of Christ in peace and concord.

In truth, as Ecclesiastes wisely says, “To all things there is a time and a season”!

Our gaze turned yet again to the Greek Hierarchs, and just as in ancient times the Holy Patriarch Nicholas Mystikos of Constantinople took on himself the difficulties of the Church of Alania, so also now His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, President of the Holy Synod in Resistance, by whose prayers, support, and help I myself am now here, has assumed this responsibility.

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us: “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find” (St. Matthew 7:7). So, too, we, in accordance with the word of the Lord, after many years of searching, have finally found a tranquil haven, where we have encountered compassion, sincere love, and Christian concern.

To me is entrusted a holy, but also very heavy, burden: to become Bishop in South Ossetia, which is being rent asunder by war and genocide. Vigorous, intense, and astute Hierarchical activity is indispensable, according to the words of the Apostle Paul:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (II St. Timothy 4:2-4).

I, as an ailing refugee, devoid of power, because I am weak, have only one weapon: hope in our Lord and God.

And now, I make bold to beseech you, holy Hierarchs, Fathers, brothers and sisters, in the words of the Apostle Paul: “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you” (II Thessalonians 3:1).

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, holy Hierarchs of Christ:

I thank you for the honor and confidence that you show to me, in my weakness, through your election and appointment of my unworthiness to the Hierarchical ministry of the people of God.

At this truly historic moment, I invoke the aid of Mary, the most holy *Theotokos*, in whose honor our Cathedral Church (in which her wonder-working and myrrh-streaming Icon is kept) is dedicated, and the help of the Holy Princes and Martyrs of Alania, Shalva, Elisbar, and Bidzini, whose holy Relics are also housed in our Cathedral, of the Holy Great Martyr George, of the Holy Enlighteners Alanos and Goar, of the Holy Hierarchs John of San Francisco and Nectarios of Pentapolis, who watch over the city of Tskhinvali, the capital of South Ossetia, and of all the Saints, in the work of reëstablishing the most holy Diocese of Alania.

I pray that God may enable my unworthiness to justify the confidence that they show in me and to increase the Grace that is given to me through these holy Hierarchs, unto the salvation of men's souls, the upbuilding of the Church of Christ, and the glory of the Holy Consubstantial Trinity, of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

