

LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER
JOHN PAUL II
TO THE APOSTOLIC ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CAUCASUS

13 August 1999

To The Very Reverend Giuseppe Pasotto, C.S.S.
Apostolic Administrator of The Caucasus

In the communion of the Church and from the Tombs of the Apostles Peter and Paul who sealed their witness with their blood in this City of Rome, I greet you and the Catholic community of the Caucasus: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:13).

You are gathered with my close collaborator in the Secretariat of State, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Re, to consecrate a church which has long been part of Georgia's history and is a significant memorial of the Catholic presence in this beloved land. The building recalls both the sorrows of Georgia and the sacrifices of the Catholic people there. But the Church of the Assumption now rises anew as a symbol of Georgia's new-found hope and a proclamation of the Risen Christ in whom every darkness turns to light.

It is a building made by human hands, but by the hands of those who are themselves "living stones [being] built into a spiritual house" (1 Pt 2:5). The building is therefore an icon of the mystery of the Church, "made holy by the blood of Christ, a bride made radiant with his glory, a virgin splendid in the wholeness of her faith, a mother blessed through the power of the Spirit" (*Prayer of Dedication of a Church*). It represents the temple of Christ's eternal sacrifice which houses the altar, "the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1383).

I pray most fervently that this church and the community of Christ's faithful who gather here will become more and more a sign and instrument of healing and new life for all Catholic Georgians as they move into the Third Millennium of the Christian era. I entrust the entire Georgian Catholic community to the glorious intercession of the Virgin Mary assumed into heaven: may "the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1) lead the Church in Georgia to the undying light of her Son. As a pledge of glory in him, I gladly impart to all who share the joy of this occasion my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, on the Solemnity of the Assumption, 13 August 1999

IOANNES PAULUS II