



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE PASSING OF HIS BEATITUDE ANASTAS,
ARCHBISHOP OF TIRANA DURRËS AND OF ALL ALBANIA**

*To His Eminence John
Metropolitan of Korça
Locum Tenens of the Orthodox Church of Albania*

Having learned of the death of His Beatitude Anastas, Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and All Albania, I wish to express my condolences to you, to the Members of the Holy Synod and to all the priests, monks, nuns and lay faithful of the beloved Orthodox Church of Albania, together with the assurance of my prayers that God our merciful Father may grant him the reward of his labours.

The faith of the Orthodox community of Albania was certainly embodied in the life of our dear brother, whose zealous pastoral service helped the people rediscover its richness and beauty following the years of state-imposed atheism and persecution. In this regard, I have fond memories of my meeting with His Beatitude on my first Apostolic Journey outside of Italy, and I cherish the fraternal embrace and words exchanged on that occasion.

Throughout his long life and ministry as a priest and as a bishop, he always manifested a profound dedication to the Gospel, serving and proclaiming the Lord in various geographical and cultural contexts, in Greece, Africa and Albania. He did so by following the example of Saint Paul, who dedicated himself so much to Christ that he could say, "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor 9:22).

When assuming the responsibility of guiding the Orthodox Church in Albania, he desired to enter deeply into the hearts of those entrusted to his care, especially their traditions and identity, without ever losing communion with the other Orthodox Churches. At the same time, he also engaged willingly in dialogue and promoted peaceful coexistence with other Churches and religions.

When he first arrived in Albania, some priests welcomed him with the Easter greeting in Greek, “*Christos Anesti!*” He replied in Albanian manifesting a fervent desire to live with his people and bear witness to the love of God, which overcomes all darkness and oppression, in the midst of those who had suffered greatly.

Now that his earthly life has come to an end, I pray that, through the mercy of God the Almighty Father, His Beatitude may eternally praise the Blessed Trinity, together with all the confessors of the faith and the pastors who have proclaimed the word of salvation to peoples everywhere and at all times.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 27 January 2025

FRANCIS