

# Tamara Grdzeldze

**Tamara Grdzeldze** is a graduate of Tbilisi University in Georgia, St Vladimir's Theological Seminary in the United States, and Oxford University in the United Kingdom. In Georgia she did research in Georgian Hagiography at Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature, as well as taught Georgian language and literature at school. From January 2001 through December 2013, Grdzeldze served in Geneva, Switzerland, as a programme executive for the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, which coordinates dialogue among Christian leaders on matters related to theology, doctrine and the nature of the church. She describes her experience of inter-church and inter-cultural dialogue while at the WCC as "a school of international relations" in itself. In 2014 she was appointed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia Ambassador of Georgia in the Holy See (Vatican). Among the gifts she presented to Pope Francis was a copy of the book *A Cloud of Witnesses: Opportunities for Ecumenical Commemoration*, a WCC publication which she co-edited in 2009 with Br. Guido Dotti, member of the Monastic Community of Bose. She published widely on Georgian hagiography, Georgian church history, orthodoxy and modern issues, ecclesiology, hermeneutics, inter-confessional dialogue. Among her publications: *The limits of the Church: Essays from Orthodox Theologians on Ecumenism*, ed. Tamara Grdzeldze, Tbilisi 2000; *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos: Two Eleventh Century Lives on the Hegoumenoi of Iviron* (2009); *Reading the Gospels with the Early Church: A Guide*, ed. Tamara Grdzeldze Geneva 2013.

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## **Martyrology in the Twentieth Century: Orthodox Church of Georgia**

The paper reconstructs the story of the Georgian martyrs (mainly clerics, but also laypeople) who gave witness in defense of justice and of the rights of Church in the first years of the Soviet regime in Georgia (established in 1921). Their recent canonization and acknowledgment as martyrs by the Orthodox Church of Georgia (though they do not correspond to the category of "classical martyrdom" in odium fidei) constitutes an significant event. The speaker is convinced that the act of remembering can be a source of reconciliation and that history changes only by establishing new relations with the past, by willingness to remember not for the sake of remembering but for the sake of making peace. The new Georgian martyrs witnessed to Christ up to the death, they stood up as rivals to the existing political system causing injustice. In the act of their canonisation by the Orthodox Church of Georgia we can see a good balance between the national interests and struggle against injustice and violation of the human dignity, a way of restoring the "brokenness" of the Body of Christ.

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