



# Mission Report

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- \* **In the Republic of Georgia, 100 Abortions for Every 44 Babies Born**
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- \* **This Month's Pro-Life Resource: *Surviving Spiritual Warfare***

*Pictured left: Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, HLI Regional Director for Asia and Oceania, spoke on "Population Control and the False Compromise of Contraception" at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Families in Georgia, Asia.*

Dear Pro-Life Friend in Christ,

In this issue of *Mission Report*, Dr. Ligaya Acosta reports from the Republic of Georgia, Asia, where she was able to introduce HLI's mission for the first time. Her mission trip was none-too-soon. Georgia's population is dropping, as more babies are aborted each year than are born. The bishop of Caucaso, Georgia, was happy to welcome Dr. Acosta to the country, and the parish priests of the various churches there were very grateful for the HLI resources that she left for their use.

Dr. Acosta was also able to speak to a group of medical students in the capital city of Tbilisi. The Catholic medical students were eager to hear the Gospel of Life. Abortion is rampant in Georgia and the medical students are required to perform it. Though she was only able to speak to a few of the students, Dr. Acosta hopes to speak to more on her next visit to Georgia.

Last, but far from least, Dr. Acosta was able to speak in my place at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Families, providentially held in Georgia at the same time. Her eye-opening speech was on the topic "Population Control and the False Compromise of Contraception," an issue that is not widely known in Georgia.

My dear friends, our efforts in standing for Life and Family would not be possible without your dedicated support. On behalf of the HLI family, I thank you and wish you every blessing of Almighty God.

Yours in Christ and in Our Lady,

Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President, Human Life International



Fr. Shenan J. Boquet  
President

## MISSIONARY TRIP TO GEORGIA

*By Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, HLI Regional Director for Asia and Oceania, May 2016*

“Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.” (Proverbs 16:3) Trusting in this bible verse, which I have always kept in my heart, I left my home in the Philippines on May 11, 2016 for Tbilisi, capital city of the Republic of Georgia. This, my first trip to the Republic of Georgia, was a result of God’s providence. I almost postponed the trip due to budgetary constraints. But before I could inform HLI Central of my postponement, I got an urgent message from our indefatigable president, Fr. Shenan Boquet. An important meeting in Rome kept Fr. Boquet from speaking at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Families (WCF X), held in Tbilisi from May 16-18. Fr. Boquet asked me to speak on his behalf and to take the hotel room already reserved for him. This made it financially possible for me to keep my original plans for a mission to the Republic of Georgia



## DECLINING POPULATION IN GEORGIA

Georgia is located in Southwestern Asia between Turkey and Russian, but the people of Georgia identify more with Europe than with Asia. Covering an area of 43,300 square miles, Georgia, formerly part of the Soviet Union, became an independent state in 1991. Catholics comprise a small minority of less than 1% of the population. Nearly 84% of the country’s total population of 4,935,880 embrace Orthodox Christianity, the official religion of the country.

With a total fertility rate of only 1.77 children born per woman, Georgia has a population growth rate of -0.11%. Around 44,000 babies are born annually, while more than 100,000 abortions are performed each year. **With more babies being killed than born, it is only a matter of time before the Georgian population collapses.**

Georgian law allows abortion on demand until the 12<sup>th</sup> week. Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> weeks, the familiar exceptions are permitted: risk to mother’s life, malformation, rape, or incest.



Dr. Ligaya A. Acosta, HLI Regional Director for Asia and Oceania, with Rev. Fr. Adam Ochal (left), Parish Priest of Sts. Peter & Paul Church, and Rev. Fr. Giuseppe Pellizzari, SDB.

## A WARM WELCOME IN GEORGIA

I arrived late in the evening of May 12 to Tbilisi’s cold 62° F weather, a drastic change from the scorching hot summer weather in the Philippines. The morning after my arrival, I went to Sts. Peter and Paul Church to earnestly beg the Lord for His powerful intercession on this trip. Mass was being said in the Church for a group of pilgrims from Poland, who joyfully welcomed me. The priest leading the pilgrimage was very happy to know that I came from the Philippines. He told me that he had organized a pilgrimage to the Philippines for next year.

After an hour of prayer and adoration, I met up with the parish priest, Rev. Fr. Adam Ochal, who spoke very good English and was happy to hear about HLI and happier still to receive my gifts of HLI materials. I gave him the HLI DVD Library, the Pro-Life Handbook, Baby Joshua, and the Contraception Series. **He told me that HLI's mission is indeed needed in Georgia**, but advised me to see the bishop. Whatever the bishop says, he said, they will follow.

### **PROVIDENTIAL INTRODUCTIONS**

From Sts. Peter and Paul Church, I took a cab to the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, just down the street from the bishop's house, where I waited for Mass to be offered. At the Cathedral, I met a young Indian lady who proved to be sent to me by God. Kulandai Yesu Preethie Victoria Mary, Preethie for short, was a fifth-year medical student who spoke both English and Georgian. She soon became an interpreter and a friend with whom I spent some precious time.

Preethie introduced me to the priest who celebrated the Mass, Rev. Fr. Michal Jach, SDB, who proved to be another blessing.

Fr. Michal brought me to the bishop's residence, where unfortunately, the bishop was with a Vatican delegation who was in Georgia arranging for the Pope's visit in September. In spite of this, **Fr. Michal was very enthusiastic about a partnership with HLI in the pro-life mission, seeing it as very important to bring this mission to his congregation** where he had been stationed only six months. He asked his Father Provincial for

permission to collaborate with me, which was granted immediately. He also arranged for a very fluent English speaker, fellow SDB priest Rev. Fr. Giuseppe Pellizzari, to help in translating our conversations. We promised to keep in touch.

### **SPREADING THE PRO-LIFE MESSAGE TO MEDICAL STUDENTS**

I had dinner with Preethie that night, who had no school for the next two days. **Preethie shared that abortion is rampant in Georgia, and that the medical students are trained to perform abortions to save the life of the mother.** Being a devout Catholic, Preethie saw the need for HLI in Georgia, and invited me to have lunch and a mini-talk with her fellow medical students the next day. I accepted right away, seeing it as a chance for me to penetrate the medical school.



**Dr. Ligaya meets with some Indian medical students in Saburtalo Region, Georgia.**



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*With more babies being killed than born, it is only a matter of time before the Georgian population collapses.*

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Preethie picked me up at my hotel the next day and brought me by taxi to her apartment in the Saburtalo region, a 20-minute ride. There, I met four of her fellow medical students who were just as interested as Preethie to hear what I had to say. They apologized that their other classmates could not come because they had previous engagements, promising that on my return to Georgia they would organize a bigger group for an HLI talk. Even if they were only five at the moment, I felt joy in my heart knowing that soon they would be strongly pro-life doctors.

The next morning I had a wonderful brunch meeting with Fr. Michal and Fr. Giuseppe in a scenic restaurant owned by an Irish Catholic friend of the priests. We enjoyed a huge Irish breakfast and charted the initial course of HLI's mission in Georgia. It was a great meeting as we got to know each other more and I was able to introduce the mission of HLI in more detail. We were all very excited. Before we could finalize our plans, however, we needed to have the blessing of the bishop, so Fr. Michal kindly arranged a much anticipated appointment for me on May 17.

### **THE 10TH WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES**

After the very cordial meeting with Fr. Michal and Fr. Giuseppe, I hurried to the opening of the pre-congress session of the WCF, held at the Radisson Blu



His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia (Orthodox Church), giving the Blessings and Keynote Address at the WCF X opening ceremony.

Iveria Hotel. I was late for the opening, but I didn't mind because Steve Phelan, HLI Director of Mission Communications, was a fellow speaker at the congress. Husband and wife team Lech and Ewa Kowaleska, HLI's affiliates in Poland, were also in attendance.

The Grand Opening of the WCF X was held the next day, May 16, at the Tbilisi Philharmonic Hall. The conference was attended by around 2,000 people, mostly Georgians, but included many visitors as well. It was a great feeling seeing people of all different races and creeds united in a common goal of defending the natural family.

The opening aired live on national television, was keynoted by the most revered Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia, the Archbishop of Mtskheta-Tbilisi and Metropolitan Bishop of Abkhazia and Bichvinta, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II. The influence of this Orthodox Bishop, bent from old age, was evident. His impact and footprint, we were told, not only covers religion, but music and the arts as well.

Several speakers spoke on various topics, but the most powerful was that of Georgian Host Levan Vasadze, Chairman of WCF X and the Georgian Demographic Society 21. Fiery and fearless, **Levan enumerated the ills and threats facing the families of Georgia, whose pro-life and pro-family culture had been slowly but surely eroded by Western influence.** He even

## SPEECH EXCERPTS

*From the presentation of Dr. Ligaya Acosta, HLI Regional Director for Asia and Oceania, given at the 10<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Families in Georgia.*

Regardless of one's opinion, no one can deny that people are not having enough babies to sustain the world's population. The main reason the death peddlers give to push population control is the eradication of poverty – to improve quality of life of the poor – as if condoms or pills will put food on their tables or build them decent homes. They spend billions of dollars for population control, and I always say that if this mind-boggling amount of money that is used to purchase killer contraceptives and promote the death agenda were instead used to give them livelihood opportunities, there would be no more poverty in the world.

exposed the negative influence of the European Union, which the Government of Georgia had labored long and hard to be part of. He spoke specifically of the push for the legalization of same sex unions, which Georgians vehemently opposed.

Also worth noting was the sharing of an Orthodox priest from California on how same sex unions eventually became legal in the USA. **This is important to learn about, especially for those who think that the LGBTQ agenda is simply about non-discrimination.**

The next day, May 17, we were back at the Radisson Hotel for three parallel sessions, where Steve and I spoke. Unfortunately, we were in different rooms. Steve was in Session 2: "Family and Marriage Issues: Challenges to Family and Humanity," speaking on "Abuse of Language, Abuse of Power." I was in Session 3: "Demographic Winter, Family Size, and the Dignity and Sanctity of Human Life," together with other speakers, among whom was Don Feder, Coalitions Director and Coordinator of Regional Events of the WCF. I spoke on the topic, "Population Control and the False Compromise of Contraception."

Our room was almost filled with both local and

international participants. Levan also came to listen to us, which I took as a good sign because there were three simultaneous sessions to choose from. After my talk, many people approached me, asking for copies of my presentation, including some of my fellow speakers. Even Don Feder said my talk was good and admitted that discussion on contraception has not been given much attention at WCF. Later that day, Don sought me out to discuss the possibility of hosting a WCF Regional Conference in the Philippines.

After our session, I took the opportunity to speak with another local Georgian leader, Natia Arishvilo from "Women Pro-Life." Her Russian colleague from the same group, Natalia Moskvitina, joined us in the conversation and requested that HLI also come to Russia to train their group. We agreed to keep in touch.

At noon, I joined the traditional Family March in honor of the Georgian Family Day Celebration declared by His Holiness Ilia II. Since I had heavy bags, I decided to take the bus and meet the participants in the Orthodox Holy Trinity Cathedral, where His Holiness



**Dr. Ligaya with the Apostolic Administrator of Caucaso, Bishop Giuseppe Pasotto, CSS.**

Ilia II welcomed the participants and led a short prayer service. It proved a wise decision for me, because at the Cathedral I was able to get close to His Holiness, and at the same time to bond with the locals. It was evident that everyone was in awe of His Holiness, who is so much respected that no one dared touch him but just watched in awe from a distance.

### **THE BISHOP BLESSES HLI'S WORK**

Much as I wanted to stay till the activity was finished, I had to run to my next appointment, my meeting with His Excellency Catholic Bishop Giuseppe Pasotto, CSS, Apostolic Administrator of Caucaso and Titular Bishop of Musti, at the bishop's residence. Before the meeting, I spent some time at the Cathedral of the Assumption to beg the Lord and our Blessed Mother to be with me in the meeting. With God's amazing grace, my meeting with the bishop, accompanied by Fr. Michal and Fr. Giuseppe, went very well. The Bishop said he was happy that I had come and was glad to accept my offer of HLI programs and services. **"I don't only bless you...." he said, "I push you to go and bring this very important mission to this country who needs to hear the message."** The very kind Bishop seemed like a voice of God to me, inspiring me to carry on with HLI's very important mis-

### **SPEECH EXCERPTS**

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But while we all agree that abortion is terrible and horrible and must be stopped, it is strange that many still support contraception – the corrupt soil from which the destructive plant of abortion grew. Very sadly, many find in contraception an area of compromise, as if contraception will now, suddenly after decades of the opposite, lead to a decrease in abortion rates or even a return of fertility. The twin evil of contraception and abortion is promoted in the guise of "sexual and reproductive health/rights," even if in reality, the objective and the result is reproductive death; horrible ailments and death of women and children; promiscuity; and ultimately missing scientists, entrepreneurs, doctors, nurses, and other professionals – children who might have provided love and care to parents in their golden years, and filled up the void, providing warmth to the chilling coldness of demographic winter.



**Dr. Ligaya with Sr. Anna Maria Crivellari and the staff of INER-Georgia.**



sion. He told me that when he had first become bishop of Georgia, he had created a Family and Life ministry called INER-Georgia, which was managed by an Italian nun, Sr. Anna Maria Crivellari, and operated from the city of Kutaisi. He told me to see Sister Anna Maria and discuss how we can coordinate in the mission. With the invaluable help of Fr. Michal, I set an appointment with Sister Anna Maria the next day.

### MEETING WITH SISTER ANNA MARIA

In a hired car, I set forth for the city of Kutaisi, situated 137 miles west of Tbilisi. It was a more than three-hour ride. I arrived there around 1:00 p.m. and was received very warmly by Sister Anna Maria and a fellow nun, as well as English-speaking Lali Charkviani, staff of INER, two Stigmatine priests, and two seminarians with whom I had lunch. We had great conversation at lunch, which I used as an opportunity to further introduce HLI's mission. Everyone was happy to receive the HLI pro-life resources I had brought, which will hopefully be translated to Georgian.



Dr. Ligaya giving HLI pro-life resources to Lali Charkviani of INER-Georgia, Kutaisi.

After lunch, Sister Anna Maria brought me to the INER-Georgia office, adjacent to the convent. There, the whole staff greeted me warmly and we sat down for a meeting, with one of the seminarians serving as interpreter. At the meeting, which lasted more than two hours, I asked what their programs and services are, and I introduced HLI's mission and offered our services. I found that, **while INER is actively advocating against abortion, they don't know about contraception**, and thus are silent about it. One staff member even thought that, since it is being actively promoted by the government, it must be a good means to prevent abortion. Sister Anna Maria stated that they needed formation and would welcome pro-life training from HLI.

### ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL MISSION

On my long trip back home, I couldn't help some tears falling from my eyes, as I profusely thanked God for hearing my fervent prayers. My missions for HLI are always a powerful show of God's amazing glory. It is amazing that I am able to make lasting friendships and partnerships with people I'd never known previously, and that I am able to go to countries I never before knew existed. I know that when one fully surrenders to the Lord, He is free to mold him and use him powerfully for His glory.

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“A man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection.” How prophetic Blessed Pope Paul VI is indeed. Once contraception became easily available, we see distortions of sexuality, and problems of human relationships, of marriages breaking down, and violent aggressiveness towards women, rationalized as women empowerment/feminism, discovering that as a result of contraception, they are being abused by men.

I thank with all my heart the generous benefactors of Human Life International, without whom we could never do these missions. I know we can never repay you, but I'm sure God will. In my many prayers each day, I beg God to protect you and your families, give you good health and a long life, and multiply your resources, so you can continue to give to HLI, and we in turn can continue to bring the Gospel of Life to all the nations.

I also thank HLI President Father Boquet for his unceasing prayers, confidence, and trust in us – his soldiers in the battlefield. I am forever grateful to all the staff of HLI Central who never leave any stone unturned to support us in the frontlines.

May God reward you all a millionfold and may everything you do glorify the Lord!

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In God's wisdom and loving design, the endometrial lining is created lush and healthy, meant to provide nourishment for the newly conceived baby who will stay in the womb for nine months. But when a woman uses contraceptives, the environment in the womb becomes hostile to implantation and thus the baby is aborted.

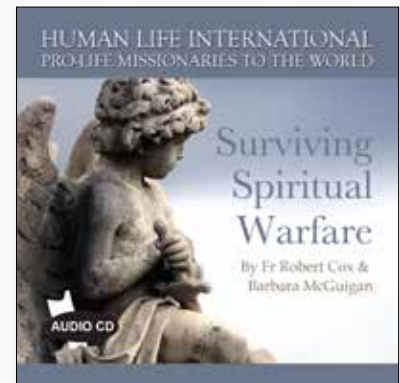
## DONATE \$53 OR MORE TO HLI THIS MONTH AND GET OUR LATEST PRO-LIFE RESOURCE!

This month, when you donate \$53 or more to support HLI's life-saving mission, you'll receive the audio CD, *Surviving Spiritual Warfare*, a talk by Father Robert Cox and Barbara McGuigan.

Throughout our spiritual walk with God we all will experience warfare against evil forces. Some people ignore this conflict or don't know how to respond. Father Robert Cox and Barbara McGuigan help us face this battle that occurs in our lives.

Father Robert Cox states that we will be in spiritual battle until we die or lose our use of reason. To help us face this battle every day, his talk gives insight into the nature of spiritual warfare, suggestions on how to wage the battle and what to avoid while in battle. He calls us to overcome our sinful nature, so we can better accomplish the work God has called us to through humility, submission to God's will, and the sacrament of penance.

Barbara McGuigan speaks first about some of the challenges she has faced in her own life by following God's will. She goes on to say that it is only through grace that we can face spiritual warfare and the challenges that arise in our lives. It is grace that soaks up the scars from sorrow and allows us to respond to Jesus even when it is difficult. Barbara gives us a spiritual warfare kit explaining why each element is essential to surviving spiritual warfare.



***Surviving Spiritual Warfare, a talk by Father Robert Cox and Barbara McGuigan, is this month's pro-life educational resource.***

**Please send your gift of \$53 or more to HLI, and we'll ship this audio CD out to you today!**