Bishops of Serbian Orthodox Church attended celebrations in Pskov Monastery of the Caves



On August 22, 2019, with a blessing of His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, a group of bishops and clergy of the Serbian Patriarchate made a pilgrimage to shrines in the Russian North. The group included Bishop Irinej of Bac; Bishop Anthony of Moravici, rector of the Moscow representation of the Serbian Orthodox Church; Bishop Isihije of Mohacs, vicar of the Diocese of Bac; and Archpriest Vladan Simic, secretary of the Diocese of Bac. The guests were accompanied by Yu. Khoshev, secretariat for inter-Orthodox relations, Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations (DECR).

From August 23-26, the pilgrims were on a visit to the Valamo Monastery of the Transfiguration, in which they venerated the monastery's shrines and visited the monastic hermitages, and on August 25, the day of the Synaxis of the Valamo Saints, Bishop Irinej celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the

monastery's Cathedral of the Transfiguration.

On August 26 and 27, the Serbian guests were in Pskov. They venerated the shrines of the Cathedral of the Trinity and saw some historical sites of the city. They also visited the Mirozhi Monastery of the Transfiguration and saw churches and historical sites in the city of Izborsk.

On August 27, Bishop Irinej and his party arrived in the Pskov-Caves Monastery of the Dormition in which they were warmly welcomed the Metropolitan Tikhon of Pskov and Porkhov and the brethren of the monastic community.

On August 28, the monastery's patronal feast day, Bishops Irinej, Anthony and Isihij concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with Metropolitan Hilario of Volokolamsk, head of the DECR, and Metropolitan Tikhon. The service was attended by a great number of the faithful and held in the square at the Cathedral of Archangel Michael.

In conclusion of the service, Metropolitan Tikhon as head of the Metropolis of Pskov and abbot of the Pskov-Caves Monastery warmly welcomed the guests from the Serbian Orthodox Church. Addressing the head of the DECR, he said in particular, 'The years of your youth were passed here in the Pskov-Caves Monastery among other places… We are very glad that after decades you have returned here and we pray the Most Holy Mother of God that She, on her special day, may give you special strength, joy and peace – all that She so abundantly gives to every sincere heart that comes to Her, especially on the days of Her great feasts. We are soliciting you prayers and will always be delighted to see you in the Pskov-Caves Monastery'. He also greeted the hierarchs of the Serbian Church and asked for their holy prayers, expressing gratitude for their coming on that very day.

In his response, Metropolitan Hilarion greeted the congregation on the occasion of the feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God and conveyed to those present a blessing from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. Then he spoke on special veneration that had been shown for the Mother of God since the very baptism of Rus' 'as She gave life not only to our Lord Jesus Christ but also has given Herself to us and become the Heavenly Mother for all of us'.

Addressing Metropolitan Tikhon, His Eminence said, 'I am very glad that it is you who have been appointed as ruling bishop of the diocese of Pskov and abbot of this holy monastery. In the same years when I came here as a young man, you, also a young man, lived here as a novice. You knew every starets and many years later created a remarkable film about them. It is not accidental that His Holiness has chosen you when the question arose about the need to fill the vacancy on the See of Pskov and to appoint an abbot for the Pskov-Caves Monastery'.

Metropolitan Hilarion also greeted the guests from the Serbian Orthodox Church. He said that this Church has always been close to the Russian Orthodox Church and that our peoples are of the same faith and blood. ‘We can feel this closeness especially keenly when the Russian Church has been subjected to aggression from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which has invaded the sacred boundaries of our Church – Ukraine contrary to all church canons and to the entire canonical and historical Tradition. Not a single Local Orthodox Church has recognized this lawless action of the Patriarch of Constantinople. And the Serbian Church immediately raised her voice against this action, and today we together oppose the ongoing lawlessness, praying to the Most Holy Mother of God that She may put a stop to this upheaval in the Orthodox Church’.

He said that these developments would not shake either the Russian Orthodox Church or the universal Orthodox Church. ‘In the history of the Church there were heretical Patriarchs of Constantinople; there were Patriarchs of Constantinople who were apostates from Orthodoxy; there were Patriarchs of Constantinople who were uniates; whereas the Church held out and will hold out; and nobody can shake our holy Orthodox faith as we bear witness to it by our entire life’.

In conclusion, Metropolitan Hilarion said, ‘I believe that the Mother of God will always cover us from every evil by Her veil – us, our holy Church and our beloved Motherland, and all of us’.

Then the bishops, clergy, monastics and lay people marched in a procession with the cross around the monastery.

During the festive repast, Metropolitan Hilarion thanked Metropolitan Tikhon of Pskov and Porkhov for the hospitality and pointed to his efforts to adorn the monastery, expressing hope that ‘the monastery will have the same importance for the Orthodox as it had in the previous century. He also cordially greeted the guests from the Serbian Orthodox Church and thanked Bishop Irenej in particular as the one ‘who always stands on guard of the canonical church Tradition. We thank you for your firm, consistent, calm and theologically well-considered position which you express both in the Serbian Orthodox Church and among the Greek episcopate and on inter-Orthodox platforms. We are standing in an acute need of such witness. On behalf of His Holiness the Patriarch and the whole Russian Orthodox Church, I would like to thank you for your firm canonical stand’.

DECR Communication Service

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