



## Moscow Representation of Orthodox Church of Antioch celebrates its patronal feast



On 26<sup>th</sup> July 2019, commemoration day of the Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Moscow Representation of the Orthodox Church of Antioch – the Church of Archangel Gabriel. Officiating at the divine service was Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, rector of the church, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Concelebrating with the archpastor were Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman; clerics of the Orthodox Church of Antioch; and clergy of the church.

Attending the Liturgy were heads and representatives of various diplomatic missions.

Praying at the service was a group of Orthodox pilgrims from Lebanon, as well as numerous parishioners and guests.

Among those present was also Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio to the Russian

Federation.

A moleben before the icon of Archangel Gabriel was said after the Divine Liturgy.

Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis delivered a homily, saying in particular:

“The Holy Church teaches us to bear witness to Christ before the entire humanity, for the Lord wants us to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt. 5:13-14). If we want to imitate apostles in preaching the glad tidings, we have to encourage the whole world to keep the commandments, showing mercy and defending the truth” (cf. Mt.5:3-12).

Metropolitan Niphon thanked Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, for taking part in the celebrations. “We ask you to convey to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill our love and appreciation. We always feel his support and love for us and representatives of the Patriarchate of Antioch,” Vladyka Niphon said.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and on the instruction of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, DECR chairman, Archpriest Nikolai Balashov greeted Metropolitan Niphon, saying, “I convey to you sincere gratitude from His Holiness and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church for many years of your devoted, blameless and zealous service as representative of the ancient See of Antioch in the capital of our Orthodox homeland.”

“Dear Vladyka, may the Holy Archangel Gabriel, herald of God’s mercy and grace, help you in your ministry for many and good years,” Fr. Nikolai continued, “You are for us an angel of peace, a messenger of love, who for more than four decades has been showing to Christians in Moscow the brotherly faithfulness of the Christians of the East, with whom we are bound up by common faith, common tradition and unity of the Holy Church. In these days of troubles some want to undermine this unity. However, despite it all, the faithfulness to the church unity of our brothers of the East remains unshakeable, and we are grateful for their love and support.”

“Your sorrows and joys are our sorrows and joys. Death of people in the canonical territory of the Church of Antioch in Syria inflicts great sufferings on us as well. And you know that the Russian Orthodox Church and all the people of our country have not been indifferent to the plight of our brothers, striving to do all we can to come to aid and put an end to the evil of war, terrorism, hatred and homicide,” Archpriest Nikolai also said, “And the Holy Church of Antioch does not remain indifferent to the oppression facing our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, praying for them, supporting them and showing them her fraternal love.”

“Dear Vladyka, you have been a model of faithfulness to the truth for so many years. May the Lord strengthen and bless you in your ministry, together with the wonderful community of this Moscow church, for whom you are a good shepherd and father,” Fr. Nikolai added.

Metropolitan Niphon thanked the parishioners for their prayers and wished to the delegation from Lebanon blessed pilgrimage to the holy sites of the Russian land. A festive reception at the Representation of the Orthodox Church of Antioch followed.

*DECR Communication Service*

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