



## **Metropolitan Hilarion meets with Chairman of Slovenia-Russia Friendship Association**

On March 13, 2019, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), met with Chairman of Slovenia-Russia Friendship Association and the first ambassador of Slovenia to the Russian Federation Saša Geržina. The Slovenian guest was accompanied by Mr. Branko Rakovec, Slovenia's Ambassador to Russia, and Mr. Urban Ocvirk, and assistant to chairman of the Slovenia-Russian Association. The meeting took place at the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies (CMI).

Taking part in the meeting were also Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad, and Hieromonk Kirill (Peregudin), DECR secretariat for the far abroad.

Metropolitan Hilarion warmly welcomed the guests to the CMI. He noted the fruitful cooperation between the Slovenian Embassy in Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church, which has actively developed in recent years, and wished success to the recently appointed ambassador in his new place of service.

During the talk, which was held in a friendly atmosphere, they discussed the development of interaction between the Moscow Patriarchate and Slovenia in the religious and cultural spheres and prospects for inter-Christian relations with the Catholic Church of Slovenia. Special attention was given to the preparation of an annual memorial ceremony to take place on the Vrsic Pass in the end of July, which will be timed to the 103d anniversary of the foundation of the Chapel of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles built in memory of the Russian soldiers who died there during World War I.

Mr. Geržina conveyed an official invitation to representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church to come for the commemoration.

In conclusion of the meeting, Metropolitan Hilarion presented the guests with copies of his book *Patriarch Kirill* published in the Lives of Remarkable People book series.

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The Russian chapel on the Vrsic Pass is a memorial dedicated to the Russian soldiers who died there during World War I. Nearby the city of Kranska Gora, a camp for Russian war prisoners was organized for building a road through the pass. In the period from 1915 to 1917, some 10 thousand men died in that camp from hard work and hunger. In the memory of their dead companions, Russian war prisoners built a small wooden chapel nearby their barracks in memory of their dead companions.

In the 1920s, the road through the pass was reconstructed, and the remains of the war prisoners were Reburied in a common grave near the chapel. In 2005, the territory adjacent to the chapel was transformed into a memorial park. In 2016, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk attended the commemoration events devoted to the centenary of the Russian chapel. The centenary was also attended by President Vladimir Putin and President Borut Pahor

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