



Solemn celebrations held in Sofia on commemoration day of St. Seraphim the Archbishop of Boguchar

On February 25, 2019, His Holiness Neophyte, Patriarch of Bulgaria, met with Metropolitan Tikhon of Vladimir and Suzdal, who came to Bulgaria for the celebrations on the commemoration day of St. Seraphim (Sobolev), Archbishop of Boguchar.

Metropolitan Tikhon conveyed to the Primate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church messages of greeting from His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, as well as Patriarchate Kirill's words of gratitude to Patriarch Neophyte for his congratulations on the 10th anniversary of Patriarch Kirill's enthronement and sending a delegation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church for the festivities in Moscow.

Metropolitan Tikhon thanked Patriarch Neophyte for the invitation to visit Bulgaria for the celebrations devoted to the commemoration day of St. Seraphim. 'Thanks to the invitation of Your Holiness and the blessing of Patriarch Kirill, I have an opportunity to visit Sofia, the old Bulgarian capital city of Veliko Tarnovo, and Pleven. I was glad to celebrate the Divine Liturgy together with Metropolitan Gregory at the cathedral in Veliko Tarnovo, to have a fraternal talk with Metropolitan Ignatius in Pleven, to be given a warm welcome by the father superior of the monastery, Bishop Sionius, and to honour the memory of the Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteer corps, who fought together for the liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke', he said.

Patriarch Neophyte warmly welcomed the hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church and those who accompanied him and, as a token of Patriarchal blessing, presented Metropolitan Tikhon with an Icon of the Good Shepard – Our Lord Jesus Christ. Metropolitan Tikhon presented His Holiness with an icon of St. Simon, the first Bishop of Vladimir and Suzdal, and the Holy Prince George of Vladimir.

Later that day, the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church visited the Rila Patriarchal Monastery, the largest one in Bulgaria, in which they venerated the relics of the founder of the monastery, St. John of Rila, and other monastery's shrines. Metropolitan Tikhon was welcomed by the abbot of the Rila Monastery, Bishop Eulogius of Andrianople.

In the evening, Russian Ambassador to Bulgaria A. Makarov gave a dinner in honour of the delegation

at his residence. It was also attended by Bishop Gerasim of Melnish, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and Hieromonk Meletius, assistant rector of Sofia Theological Academy.

On the commemoration day of St. Serahim, February 26, Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the St. Nicholas church of the Sofia Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church. He was assisted by a great assembly of the Bulgarian clergy. There were numerous parishioners. Present at the service were also Ambassador A. Makarov and V. Gusev, a counsellor of the Russian embassy.

The Gospel was read in the Bulgarian language. During the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, petitions were lifted up for the unity of the Orthodox Church and safeguarding it from divisions and schisms.

After the service, Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), rector of the ROC representation, addressed the congregation. He asked to convey words of cordial gratitude to Patriarch Neophyte for giving his blessing upon the Bulgarian hierarch and clergy to concelebrate on that festive day, and presented the celebrants with icons of St. Seraphim. 'Many Years of Life' was sung to the Bulgarian and Russian peoples and all the present in the church.

After that, Metropolitan Tikhon led the faithful in a thanksgiving at the relics of St. Seraphim in the crypt of the St. Nicholas church. The anointing with the holy oil from the relics of St. Seraphim lasted in the crypt for the whole day.

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