Metropolitan Hilarion completes his pilgrimage to Holy Land



On January 10 and 11, 2019, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), continued his pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

On January 10, after his meeting with His Beatitude Theophilos II, Patriarch of Jerusalem and All Palestine, the DECR chairman went to the Jordan River and after that visited the Russian museum and park compound located in the center of Jericho on the so-call “Joasaph’s” area of about 10 hectares. This land was purchased in 1886 by Hieromonk Joasaph (Plekhanov) with the funds given by Russian benefactor Helen Reznichanko and later handed over to the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. Surviving there is the orange-tree garden planted by Father Joasaph and several pise buildings. In 2008, the Palestinian authorities gave this land back to Russia. Archaeologists discovered there ruins of a 5-century Byzantine church.

The compound was opened in January 2011. Growing in the park are plants mentioned in the Bible, and its main object of note is Zacchaeus’s fig tree. In the museum, there are archaeological discoveries including Jewish, Byzantine, Roman and Arab coins, artefacts, church vessels and fragments of

Byzantine mosaic. His Eminence Hilarion met with the director of the museum and park compound, R. Dikansky.

On January 11. Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission representation in Tiberias dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene Equal-to-the-Apostles. The archpastor was assisted by Hieromonk Dometian (Markarian), deputy head of the Mission, and Rev. Alexander Karzan, DECR.

This land was purchased by Archimandrite Leonid (Sentsov), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, in 1908. The St. Mary Magdalene church was built there in 1962. In the 90s, the church walls were painted with frescoes reflecting events linked with the Sea of Galilee also called Lake Tiberias or Lake of Gennisaret.

Addressing the worshippers, His Eminence conveyed them a blessing from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, 'who has sent me to the Holy Land to meet with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos II of Jerusalem and All Palestine and make a pilgrimage to holy places'. He spoke of many events from the life of the Lord Jesus Christ that took place there. He also thanked the workers of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and nuns of the Gorny Convent who host Russian pilgrims there.

After the service, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Monastery of the Twelve Apostles built by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1925 in the eastern part of the ruins of Capernaum that saw many events of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Catholic church in Tabgha was the next point in the pilgrimage. According to tradition, it was built at the place where the Lord worked a miracle by feeding five thousand people with five loaves and two fish.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion ascended the Mount of Beatitudes on which the Saviour said His Sermon on the Mount.

On Mount Tabor, the place of the Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Convent of the Transfiguration (Patriarchate of Jerusalem). It was built in the 19th century on the remains of the Byzantine Basilica built by Queen Helena Equal-to-the-Apostles. Among those who helped to build the church were the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society and other benefactors from Russia.

On Mt. Tabor, His Eminence also visited the Catholic monastery of the Holy Transfiguration.

In Nazareth, where our Saviour lived in His childhood, boyhood and youth, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Patriarchate of Jerusalem Metropolis of Nazareth to meet with Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth.

Then His Eminence went to the place where, according to tradition, the Holy Family lived.

In Cana of Galilee identified in the Gospel's history as a place of the Saviour's first miracle, when, at the marriage feast, He turned water into wine, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Monastery of Protomartyr George the Conqueror (Patriarchate of Jerusalem) built at the place believed to be the house of St. Simon the Canaanite. The icon screen installed in the church was gifted by the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society. In the church, there are stone water yokes of the New Testament times and the venerated icon of St. Simeon the Canaanite.

In the evening, Metropolitan Hilarion returned to the Russian Mission in Jerusalem, where the head of the mission, Archimandrite Alexzander (Yelisov), gave a farewell dinner in honour of the high guest and his fellow travellers.

In his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the DECR chairman was accompanied by Hieromonk Dometian (Markarian), deputy head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, and Father Alexander Karzan and Mr. Ph. Champion, DECR, as wells as Sub-deacons I. Nikolaev and V. Li, and Orthodox layman A. Rybakov.

DECR Communication Service

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