



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Patronal feast celebrated at Antioch church representation



On July 26, 2018, the Day of the Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, presided over the Divine Liturgy at the church of the Archangel Gabriel, the Moscow representation of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople. The archpastor was assisted by Metropolitan Niphon of Philippople, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Metropolitan Athanasios of Latakia, a hierarch of the Church of Antioch.

Participating in the liturgy were also Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman, and clergy of the Orthodox Church of Antioch.

The festive liturgy, which was celebrated in Church Slavonic and Arabic, was attended by numerous heads and representatives of diplomatic missions of the EU countries, as well as Palestine, Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, Algeria, Canada, Lebanon, Albania, Mexico, Norway, and Costa Rica.

Among the worshippers were representatives of the University of Balamand (Orthodox Church of Antioch), who came to Moscow for the Russian language summer institute held at the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies, and a group of pilgrims from the Middle East and numerous guests and parishioners of the Metochion.

The liturgy was broadcast live by Télé Lumière, a Lebanese international TV network.

After the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, a prayer for peace in Ukraine was said.

After the liturgy, a thanksgiving was celebrated at the icon of the Archangel Gabriel.

Welcoming Metropolitan Hilarion, Metropolitan Niphon said in particular,

‘We so much rejoiced over your meeting in Bari with His Holiness Pope Francis and Primates and representatives of Christian Churches in the Middle East, among them His Beatitude Cardinal and Maronite Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros al-Rahi. We could feel your support for Christians in the East. Your important and weighty word made an impact on that meeting.

‘During the meeting of heads and representatives of Eastern Churches on the situation of Christians in the Middle East, you also mentioned the historic meeting of His Holiness Pope

Francis and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in Havana, the talks devoted to the situation of Christians in the Middle East. You underscored the efforts of the Patriarch of Moscow in that field and spoke about the humanitarian aid given by the Russian Church and its equal distribution in Syria to both Christians and Muslims. You spoke about the noble initiative of the Moscow Patriarchate to give medical aid to children who became disabled as a result of the war. All this makes us profoundly grateful to your Church, which is tied with the Church of Antioch, and to your people, who are tied with our people by strong historical bonds’.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the congregation, saying,

‘On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, I greet you all on the occasion of the patronal feast of the Antioch Metochion, the commemoration day of God’s Archangel Gabriel.

Dear Metropolitan Niphon, I would like to convey to you the best regards from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and his gratitude for the long-standing and much useful work you have carried out here, in the Russian land, representing in dignified and righteous way the Most Holy Church of Antioch.

I would also like to greet you, your Eminence Athanasios. You have recently embarked on the important service of the Metropolitan of Latakia, and I would like to wish you God’s help in your work.

We all deeply feel with the Syrian and Lebanese people in the trials which have fallen to their lot. The blessed land of Syria for several years now has been in the state of war. But with God’s help and with the assistance of the Russian Army most of the terrorists have been driven away from that land. And we very much hope that peace will again reign in this beautiful biblical land. We are praying for this and exerting our modest efforts to relieve the plight of Christians in Syria, Lebanon and throughout of the Middle East.

What had happened in some of the Middle East countries, such as Iraq, Lebanon and Syria until the terrorists were driven away from them can be rightly called a genocide against Christians. And to stop this persecution against Christians the efforts of all people of good will are needed. The Russian Orthodox Church in the person of its Patriarch has exerted every possible effort to stop the war, to put an end to the violence and let peace reign in the Middle East so that those who had to leave their lands could return to their homes’.

The DECR chairman also greeted numerous pilgrims from the Middle East who came for the patronal feast of the Antioch church representation and a group of staff members and students of the University of Balamand, saying, 'I very much hope that you will have a blessed stay in the Russian land'.

In memory of the common prayer, Metropolitan Hilarion presented Metropolitans Niphon and Athanasios with holy pectoral icons.

After the service at the metochion of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, a festive reception took place. It was attended, among other people, by heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Moscow.

DECR Communication Service

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