



Festive divine service at the Moscow Representation of the Church of Antioch



July 26, 2017 – On 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, led the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Archangel Gabriel church, representation of the Orthodox Church of Antioch in Moscow. He was assisted by Metropolitan Niphon of Philippople, rector of the church and representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Metropolitan Anthony of Zahle and Heliopolis, 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 the clergy of the church.

Present at the service, which was celebrated in Church Slavonic and Arabic, were numerous heads and representatives of diplomatic missions in the European Union, as well as Switzerland, USA, Peru, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Palestine, Pakistan, Japan, Australia, Bahrein, Cot-d'Ivoire, Algeria, Colombia, Qatar, Canada, Lebanon, Oman and Singapore.

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

After the service, a thanksgiving was said at the Icon of Archangel Gabriel.

The year 2017 will mark 40 years since Bishop Niphon was appointed as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. On July 18, 2017, the day of the Finding of the Honourable Relics of St. Sergius, the Abbot of Radonezh, after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the St. Sergius Laura of the Holy Trinity, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented Metropolitan Niphon with a commemorate pectoral icon on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his service in Moscow.

After the festive celebration at the Church of Antioch's Moscow representation, Metropolitan Hilarion read out a congratulatory message from Patriarch Kirill on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Metropolitan Niphon's service as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow.

Metropolitan Niphon expressed gratitude to Patriarch Kirill for his constant attention to the Moscow Representation of the Church of Antioch and personally to his work. He said in particular, 'We have gathered together today to glorify the patron saint of this holy church, bearing witness to the unity of our two Churches in the spirit of peace and love. Our common prayer undoubtedly strengthens the fraternal relations which have existed between our two Churches since the 16th century, when Patriarch Joachim of Antioch petitioned to the Patriarch of Constantinople for granting autocephaly to the Russian Church'. Today, these fraternal ties are growing even stronger, he stated.

Metropolitan Niphon presented the DECR chairman with an icon of Sts Peter and Paul, the founders of the See of Antioch, for prayerful memory.

Addressing himself to the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch with congratulatory words, Metropolitan Hilarion said, 'I have known you for long years, since you were an archimandrite and I was a sub-deacon. Being able to see how your service progressed through all these forty years, I rejoice in the fact that today you mark this remarkable jubilee of your service in the prime of your life, full of energy, surrounded by your flock, not only in Moscow one but also in Lebanon, who have come over here to congratulate you on this auspicious event'.

The DECR chairman wished Metropolitan Niphon 'God's inexhaustible grace-giving help in his service, so that God's grace may always give you strength, good reason, wisdom, that it may never weaken, that the blessing of the Most Holy Mother of God may always accompany you, while the intercession of the Holy Archangel Gabriel may always attend you in your life journey'.

After the service at the Antioch Moscow representation, there was also a meeting between Metropolitan Hilarion and Mr. Asad Nikad, an Orthodox benefactor who came for the celebrations from Lebanon. The talk dealt with problems of humanitarian aid to the Lebanese people, especially, in the city of Zahle.

DECR Communication Service

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