



## **Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of Patriarch of Antioch to Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, awarded by Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia**



On March 19, 2017, Archbishop George of Michalovce and Kosice (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), who had come to Moscow with the blessing of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, presented Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, with the Order of the Most Orthodox Prince Rostislav, 1<sup>st</sup> Degree.

The award was granted by His Beatitude Rostislav, Archbishop of Presov, Metropolitan of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, in recognition of Metropolitan Niphon's 'zealous ministry and services rendered to the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia' and on the occasion of his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, which had been celebrated last December.

The awarding ceremony took place at the Antioch church representation in Moscow. It was preceded by the Divine Liturgy celebrated at the St. George church by Metropolitan Niphon, Archbishop George and Bishop Anthony of Moravice, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

In his congratulatory speech, Metropolitan George pointed to His Eminence Niphon's long-standing work for interchurch contacts and pan-Orthodox cooperation. He made a special mention of the support given to the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia by the Patriarchate of Antioch and Metropolitan Niphon as its representative. 'I would like to thank you for many years of your love and service for the benefit of the entire Holy Orthodoxy, not only in Moscow but wherever the Patriarchate of Antioch sends you to. You are an apostle of unity, love and sincere friendship', he said.

Among those who extended congratulations to Metropolitan Niphon was also Bishop Anthony of Moravice who presented Metropolitan Niphon from a pectoral icon and a cross as a gift from Patriarch Irenaeus of Serbia.

In his response, Metropolitan Niphon thanked the Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia for the high attention and love, noting that he had had the honour to represent the Church of Antioch at the enthronement of His Beatitude Metropolitan Rostislav. 'I take this award as an order granted to the whole Patriarchate of Antioch, as a symbol of the unity of our Local Churches, the unity of the Middle East peoples with the peoples of Czechia and Slovakia'.

Then he addressed himself to Bishop Anthony with words of gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Irenaeus for the congratulations and paternal love and said how much he cherished the Kosovo land, where, in the Patriarchate of Pec, His Holiness Irenaeus was enthroned and he had the honour to represent at the enthronement the Patriarchate of Antioch.

During the reception that followed, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, speaking on behalf of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), extended congratulations to Metropolitan Niphon on the award. He pointed to the fraternal aid rendered by the Patriarchate of Antioch, one of the oldest Christian Churches, to the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia when it endured internal hardships. Father Nikolay also mentioned the firm and consistent support the Church of Antioch gave to Metropolitan Rostislav from the first days of his ministry as Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in spite of the fact that some other Local Churches challenged the canonical legitimacy of his election.

The reception was also attended by heads of diplomatic missions of Syria, Lebanon, Bahrein, Kuwait, Iraq, Qatar, Pakistan, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Colombia, Austria, Cyprus, Greece and Czechia.

Earlier Metropolitan Niphon was awarded the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh, 1st Decree, by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

*DECR Communication Service*

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/48635/>