



## A delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church visits Holy Mount Athos



A delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church made a pilgrimage to Holy Mount Athos from August 8 to 12, 2016, for the celebrations devoted to the millennium of the presence of Russian monasticism on Mount Athos.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the pilgrim group was led by Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, permanent member of Holy Synod and head of the Metropolia of Kazakhstan.

The delegation included Archbishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe, Archbishop Melety of Chernovtsy and Bukovina, Bishop Andrey of Rossosh and Ostrogozhsk, Bishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania, Bishop Anthony of Slutsk and Soligorsk, Hegumen Feofan (Lukyanov), head of the protocol section of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations; and clergy and laity who accompanied the archpastors.

The delegation was accompanied by Russia's Consul General in Salonika A. Popov.

The pilgrimage focused on the participation in the celebrations to honour the memory of the Protomartyr and Healer Panteleimon at the Russian monastery on Mount Athos. The hierarchs led by Metropolitan Alexander celebrated the All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy, participated in the procession with the cross and performed the Lifting of Panagia rite.

Metropolitan Alexander conveyed to the spiritual director of the Russian monastery, Hieromonk Makary (Makienko) and the brethren a blessing from the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and a congratulatory message from Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations.

In Karyes, the administrative center of Mount Athos where the Holy Kinot and the Holy Epistasia are situated, the pilgrims met with the Protos Father Barnabas.

The delegation also visited the monasteries of Koutloumoush, Xiropotam, Simonapetra, Iveron, Watopedi, Gregoriou, the Annunciation Cell, the sketes of St. Andrew, St. Elias, Old Roussik and Xilourgou.

Every day the archpastors celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the cathedral church of the St. Panteleimon Monastery and visited Athonite monasteries to pray at famous Christian holy places. During the worship services and thanksgivings they lifted up ardent prayers for His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, for archpastors, pastors, monastics and lay people of the Russian Orthodox Church, the authorities and peoples of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus and for the appeasement of the intestine strife in the Ukrainian land.

The pilgrims said prayers for the dead at the burial places of the father superior of the St. Panteleimon Monastery Schema-Archimandrite Jeremiah (Alekhin) and for the repose of the souls of the late abbots and brethren, wardens, builders and those who adorned the Russian monastery on Mount Athos.

On August 12, the pilgrimage concluded with a visit to the holy places of Salonika, including the Cathedral of the Protomartyr Demetrius of Thessaloniki, in which his myrrh-exuding relics are kept, the Cathedral of St. George, in which the relics of St. Gregory of Palamas lie in rest, and the church of St. Sophia, in which the relics of St. Basil the New Confessor are kept, the press service of the Metropolia of Kazakhstan reports.

*DECR Communication Service*

