Metropolitan Hilarion takes part in celebrations marking the centenary of the Russian chapel at Vršič Pass



On 30 July 2016, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, took part in a memorial ceremony at the Russian Chapel of the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles, at the Vršič Pass.

During the ceremony marking the centenary of the foundation of St Vladimir's Chapel, the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the President of Slovenia Borut Pahor addressed thousands of pilgrims who had come to the Vršič Pass from various parts of Slovenia.

Mr. Pahor said in particular, "There is a Russian chapel behind me. It has been here for a hundred years, reminding, inspiring and as if saying that peace is always possible, but cannot be taken for granted. I wholeheartedly thank those who have been taken care of the chapel for these hundred years... The Russian chapel under Vršič is a small, but invaluable contribution to the great idea of peace and friendship."

Mr. Vladimir Putin noted he was very glad to visit the friendly Slovenia again and said in particular:

“Both I and my compatriots feel excited when visiting this place – the Russian Chapel of St Vladimir.

“It was constructed a hundred years ago in honour of the Russian soldiers who had tragically died here during World War I. It is amazing that it was built also by the Russian soldiers to commemorate their fallen comrades. As it is known, in a prisoners-of-war camp at this pass some ten thousand Russian soldiers died from back-breaking labour, hunger and hardships.

“When I climbed up here and saw this modest chapel, I thought, ‘Who could have thought among those involved in the construction of this modest building that a hundred years later we would gather here to commemorate the victims of World War I?’ I suppose they did not think about it. Yet, this is what happens. It happens thanks to representatives of various confessions, to representatives of the Catholic Church, of the Orthodox Church, of the Muslim community. It happens thanks to the citizens of the town of Kranjska Gora and many generations of the Slovenians…”

Later the heads of the two states laid wreaths at the Obelisk to the Sons of Russia near St Vladimir’s Chapel.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, in concelebration with protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, celebrated a litiya in commemoration of the Russian prisoners of war who had died during World War I.

After the service, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the participants in the celebrations, saying in particular:

“The Russian prisoners of war, who died here, laid down their lives for their brothers. As for those who survived – what did they think of first of all? They thought of God and of the Holy Prince Vladimir the Baptizer of Russia and built this chapel with their own hands.”

“It if for a hundred years already that the people of Slovenia have been venerating this holy place and taking care of St Vladimir’s Chapel. I would like to thank all the Slovenians on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.”

That same day in Ljubljana the DECR chairman attended the ceremony of opening the Monument to the Sons of Russia and the Soviet Union Who Died in the Slovenian Land during the First and the Second World Wars. The ceremony was led by the Russian President Vladimir Putin and the President of Slovenia Borut Pahor.

In the evening Mr. Zoran Janković, Mayor of Ljubljana, gave a reception in honour of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

DECR Communication Service

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