State Duma speaker visits Russian monastery on Mount Athos



On July 5, 2016, Mr. S. Naryshkin, chairman of the Russian Federation State Duma, visited Holy Mount Athos.

He was accompanied by Bishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania, representatives of the Russian Federal Assembly chambers, scientists, historians and businessmen. The honorary guests were accompanied by Mr. J. Amanatidis, deputy minister of foreign affairs of Greece, S. Popov, president of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy, members of the Greek parliamentary delegation, and A. Popov, Russian consul general in Salonika.

In the Russian monastery on Holy Mount Athos, the guests venerated the relics of the Holy Protomartyr and Healer Panteleimon and other monastery's shrine and prayed at the Cathedrals of St. Panteleimon and the Protecting Veil. The delegation visited the monastery's historical-archeological exhibition, in which they were introduced to the main landmarks in the history of the Russian monastery on Mount

Athos presented in the form of archeological artefacts, ancient charters and manuscripts, liturgical vessels and vestments and other unique objects and displays.

During the visit, Mr. Naryshkin had a talk with the monastery's starets. 'Most of my colleagues are here, on Mount Athos, for the first time. So am I. I have long dreamt of coming here. It is a real happiness to be in this holy place, especially at so significant for Russia the year of the millennium of the Russian presence on Mount Athos', he said.

The Athonites stressed that for centuries Mount Athos was a source of spiritual enlightenment of Holy Russia and continued being such to this day, while the Russian monastery on Mount Athos is a common school of devotion for all peoples who came out of the Dnieper baptismal font.

As Mr. Naryshkin noted during the talk, the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos is of tremendous importance for today's Russia. 'We are very grateful for your prayers for us, for our homeland, for Holy Rus'. The millennium of the Russian monasticism on Mount Athos is celebrated on a broad scale in Russia. Your prayer is important and is needed in the Russian land and throughout the Orthodox world', he said.

As Mr. Amanatidis took part in the talk too, the Russian Athonites reminded him of the close ties and deep history binding Russia and Greece. Thus, Count Ioannis Kapodistrias, a Russian and Greek statesman, was the first president (1827-1831) of the liberated Greek State. Previously he was the minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Empire (1816-1822). According to the Athonites, I. Kapodistrias was a profoundly spiritual man. He played an important role in fostering friendship between the Greek and Russian nations. It also a very edifying that I. Kapodistrias was assassinated early in the morning at the church threshold while walking to a divine service. Mr. Amanatidis noted that I. Kapodistrias had been warned of a possible attempt at his life; still he did not put off his coming to the church, saying he was ready for death.

The theme of very close relations between the Orthodox nations was continued by the State Duma speaker in his interview to Greek journalists. 'The whole Orthodox world needs monastic prayers, and both Russia and Greece are interested in the preservation of the unity of the Orthodox world… Orthodox values, which unite us, determine the actions of ordinary citizens, the actions of politicians and those of the executive and legislative powers', he said.

As a commemorative gift, Sergey Naryshkin gave to the St. Panteleimon Monastery a set of rare photographs of Mount Athos made by Peter I. Sevastyanov (1811-1867), a Russian nobleman and traveler. The brethren of the Russian monastery presented the high guest with 'The History of the St. Panteleimon Monastery' in three volumes published as part of the 25-volume series "Russian Athos of

the 19th-20th Centuries'.

Mr. Naryshkin also visited the old Russian monastery 'Old Roussik', in which the center of the Russian Athonite monasticism was accommodated in the period from the 12th to the 18th centuries. Nowadays this monastery has been revived to become a hermitage under the St. Panteleimon Monastery. Mr. Naryshkin said he admired this old Russian monastery. He gave a high value to the frescoes in the hermitage's cathedral made by a group of Russian artists led by V. Nesterenko.

On the same day, the guests departed from Holy Mount Athos, the Russkiy Afon' site reports.

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