Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk on pastoral visit to dioceses of Vienna and Austria and Hungary



On November 28, 2015, Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, administrator of the dioceses of Vienna and Austria and Hungary, arrived in Austria. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of the Nativity of John the Baptist in Innsbruck (Serbian Orthodox Church's diocese of Austria and Switzerland). It was the first service to be held for the growing Russian parish in the city.

The prayers were said in the Church Slavonic and Serbian languages. After the service, Bishop Tikhon asked Father Alexander (Stolic) to convey Bishop Andrew of Austria and Switzerland (Serbian Orthodox Church) his gratitude for giving the Russian community in Innsbruck an opportunity to worship in that church on a regular bases. Bishop Tikhon also discussed with parish activists current problems involved in the registration of the Russian Orthodox community in the city and the date and agenda of the forthcoming parish assembly.

On November 29, the Day of St. Matthews, Bishop Tikhon celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral

of St. Nicholas in Vienna. After the service, he met with parishioners in an informal atmosphere.

In the following days, Bishop Tikhon held several working meetings. On November 30, he had a talk with Metropolitan Arsenios of Austria (Patriarchate of Constantinople). They discussed the current situation in the Orthodox community in Austria and cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate's diocese of Vienna and Austria and the Patriarchate of Constantinople's diocese of Austria in information work and social service.

On December 1, Bishop Tikhon met with the Vienna Burgomaster Michael Häupl and Cardinal Christopher Schönborn, Archbishop of Vienna and Primate of Austria. They discussed cooperation in the sphere of mass media and transfer of Catholic churches for organizing Orthodox parishes in Austria.

Later that day, Bishop Tikhon met with the Russian ambassador to Austria D. Lyubinsky. They discussed the development of Orthodox communities in Innsbruck, Graz and Linz as well as problems of security for the parishioners of St. Nicholas's in connection with the increased terrorist threat in Europe.

On the same day, Bishop Tikhon met with the director of the Russian Center Culture and Science Center in Austria, Ms. T. Mishukovskaya, who informed him about the cultural and linguistic programs run by the center. They agreed to organize in 2016 joint activities for religious education including lectures, concerts of church music and Christmas and Easter events.

In the evening, Bishop Tikhon attended the Christmas dinner given by Austria's Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann as part of the interreligious dialogue. He was presented to the chancellor by Cardinal Christopher Schönborn as the new representative of the Russian Church in Austria.

On December 2, Bishop Tikhon arrived in Hungary. He visited the Orthodox community in Heviz to inspect the site for the possible construction of a church and to see its draft design. Accompanied by the rector of the church under construction, Archpriest Nikolay Kim, Bishop Tikhon visited the Catholic church in which the Orthodox community celebrates twice a month.

After that, the hierarch held a working meeting with the Hunguest Hotels chain director general Istvan Hülvely to discuss the necessary conditions for a possible allocation of land for building an Orthodox church in Heviz. As a result of the meeting, Bishop Tikhon as administrator of the diocese was given a draft lease agreement for study and action.

On December 3, the eve of the Presentation of Our Lady to the Temple, Bishop Tikhon celebrated All-Night Vigil at the church of St. Sergius of Radonezh and on December 4 the Divine Liturgy at the

Cathedral of the Dormition in Budapest. The service was held in the Church Slavonic, Greek and Hungarian languages. After the service, Bishop Tikhon held several meetings with the clergy and parishioners of the diocesan churches.

On December 5, Bishop Tikhon visited the church of the Life-Giving Trinity in Debrecen, 230 km from Budapest to serve the requiem service for the late Patriarch Alexy II who died seven years ago.

In continuation of his archpastoral visitation of the diocese of Hungary, Bishop Tikhon visited the church of St. George the Conqueror at Nyieregyhaza, 235 km north-west of Budapest. He inspected the church with its iconostasis designed by S. Ushakov and the parish library with its 800 books, with the oldest one dating to the late 17th century.

In the evening of December 5, Bishop Tikhon celebrated All-Night Vigil on the eve of St. Nicholas Day at the church of the Holy Trinity in Miskolc in the north east of Hungary. Addressing him after the service, Father Joseph Krank, rector of the church, expressed the wish that he may feel at home in Hungary where he is always awaited by his faithful. Speaking in response, Bishop Tikhon thanked the rector for the best wishes and, addressing the congregation, spoke about the power of faith in today's world.

After the homily, the Sunday school children greeted the hierarch on the occasion of the feast. According to the Hungarian tradition observed on the St. Nicholas Day, Bishop Tikhon presented each child with a gift. After that, he visited the museum of Orthodox culture located in the territory of the church with its display of the 17th-19th century icons, vestments and vessels.

On December 6, Bishop Tikhon celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. Nicholas in Tokaj in the east of the country and led the celebrations marking its 225th anniversary. From 1733 to 1798, there was a Russian Tokaj Mission in the city for purchasing Tokaj wines for the imperial court. In 1790, the mission built a church of St. Nicholas there. Present at the service were the city mayor György Posta, Russia's military attaché M. Vorobyev and representatives of the All-Great Cossack Don Host, who came for the celebrations.

After the service, which had been broadcast by local television, Bishop Tikhon gave praise to St. Nicholas at his icon and addressed the worshippers with a homily.

The administrator of the diocese also held several working meetings with the Tokaj mayor and representatives of the Russian embassy in Hungary and the Cossack Don Host.

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