



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
Department for External Church Relations

## **DECR chairman celebrates Divine Liturgy at the metochion of Russian Orthodox Church in Sofia**



[gallery]

On 24 February 2013, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the St Nicholas Church, metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Sofia.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; hegumen Filipp (Vasiltsev), rector of the metochion; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; archpriest Simeon Minchev, a cleric of the metochion; and hieromonk Kirion (Olkhovik), representative of the Russian Monastery of St Panteleimon at the *Holy Community* of Mt. Athos.

At the Little Entrance, the DECR chairman, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, elevated hegumen Filipp (Vasiltsev) to the rank of archimandrite in consideration of his zealous service to the Church and on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the metochion's establishment.

After the Liturgy, archimandrite Filipp thanked Metropolitan Hilarion for his visit to the metochion and presented him with a panagia.

Metropolitan Hilarion greeted all those present, saying in particular:

“This day marks an important event in the life of the Bulgarian Church: the Church and People's Council is due to elect a new Patriarch of Bulgaria. The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church has arrived in the land of Bulgaria to take part in the enthronement of a new Patriarch.

“Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to convey to you the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. I wish it to be a historic day not only for the Bulgarian Church as such but also for its relationships with the Russian Orthodox Church. Our Churches have maintained these relations for many centuries and, I am sure, will develop and strengthen them with a new Bulgarian Patriarch in office.

“I wish to all of you God's help. Hold firmly to the Orthodox faith and cherish this church which will soon celebrate its centenary.”

Metropolitan Hilarion said a litiya for the repose of the soul of archbishop Seraphim (Sobolev) buried in the crypt of the St Nicholas Church of the Russian Orthodox Church's metochion.

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