



## **Patriarch John X of Antioch's enthronement celebrations in Beirut**

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February 17, 2013 – the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation led by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, took part in the celebrations on the occasion of the enthronement of His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of the Great Antioch of All the East.

The celebrations began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated in St. Nicholas's Cathedral in Beirut by Patriarch John X, Archbishop Chrysostomos of New Justiniana and All Cyprus and Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Participating in the liturgy were hierarchs and clergy of the Local Orthodox Churches who came to Beirut for the celebrations.

Among the worshippers were Lebanon's President M. Suleiman, Lebanon's Prime Minister N. Mikati, Russia's ambassador to Lebanon A. Zasytkin, Ukrainian ambassador V. Koval, and other diplomats accredited in Beirut. There were also Cardinal K. Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros Cardinal Al-Rahi, Greek-Catholic Melkite Patriarch Gregory III, Syro-Malabar Patriarch Ignatius Joseph III, Syriac Jacobite Patriarch Mar Ignatius Zakka I Iwas of Antioch, Catholicos Aram I of the Great House of Cilicia, as well as representatives of other non-Orthodox confessions and public figures in Lebanon and Syria.

Prayers were said in Arabic, Greek, Latin, Church Slavonic, Georgian, Serbian, Romanian, Czech, French, English and German.

During the grand reception after the liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion brought the following message to Patriarch John X from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia:

'Your Beatitude,

Beloved Brother in Christ and Concelebrant at God's Altar:

By God's Providence and by the will of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Antioch guided by the Holy Spirit, you have been called to the patriarchal ministry and installed at the glorious throne of the Holy Chief Apostles Peter and Paul in the land chosen by God.

It was in Antioch that the followers of the Saviour of the world were first called Christians. Holding fast to their confession (cf. Heb 4:14), which was taught to her by the holy apostles, the Church of Antioch has sealed the unconquerable power of faith by the blood of her many faithful. Over centuries, the Christian community with its centre in the great God's city of Antioch was a major community in the world and has won fame by the assembly of renowned bishops, theologians and zealots.

Through the labours of your late-lamented predecessors, Patriarchs of Antioch Alexander, Theodosius, Elias and Ignatius, the Orthodox Church of Antioch has extended her salutary mission far beyond Syria, Lebanon, and other countries of the East. The present flock of the Holy Church of Antioch includes Arab diaspora of Western Europe, America and Australia, as well as thousands of people who were converted to Orthodoxy thanks to the sermon preached by your Church with the true apostolic zeal. Now the Lord is entrusting this numerous flock to the care of Your Beatitude.

You are taking upon yourself high and responsible primatial ministry at the hard time for Christians in the Middle East. Again their faith is being put on trial, while the conditions of life in their native land are becoming even more difficult. Under the circumstances, all people fulfilling church obedience are being crucified with Christ, but at the same time are 'receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life' (Jn

4:36). The Primate's ministry is especially hard, as he must represent and defend the Church for which he cares in relations with the world that is not always friendly.

The Holy Church of Antioch is not in solitude under these difficult circumstances. Fraternal relations binding the followers of Christ by Gospel's love are vividly manifested in the time of troubles. The Church of Syria and Lebanon guided by Your Beatitude can always count on the support of the Russian Orthodox Church as it had been in the past not once.

While sending a delegation of our Church to the great celebration of your ascension to the Throne of the Church of Antioch, I convey to you my prayerful wishes of bestowing spiritual and physical strength upon you in your new ministry that is just beginning.

May the Lord grace your primatial ministry in the Holy Church of Antioch by the restoration of peace in the ancient land of the East, increase of love among its people, steadfastness in faith and further advance in piety of clergy and laity entrusted to you care.

With brotherly love in Christ,

**/+ KIRILL/**

**PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA'**

Metropolitan Hilarion conveyed to Patriarch John a gift from Patriarch Kirill, a patriarchal crozier, an elaborate work of Russian masters.

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