



Archbishop Ieronymos takes part in grand reception at St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura

On May 27, 2012, a festive reception was held at the Golden Hall of the Metropolitan's residence in St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura in St. Petersburg on the occasion of the visit of the head of the Orthodox Church of Greece to the city, the birthday of the ruling bishop of St. Petersburg, Metropolitan Vladimir, and the Day of the City. Among those present were His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece and his delegation, Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, bishops and clergy, St. Petersburg Vice-Governor I. Divinsky, as well as representatives of the Armed Forces, business community and the city's elite.

Metropolitan Vladimir addressed His Beatitude Ieronymos, saying, 'I would like to thank you again for your visit to the Metropolis of St. Petersburg and for your participation in the celebrations on the occasion of the Day of the City. It is a great joy and honour to welcome you to the Golden Hall, the Metropolitan's chambers of St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura, the residence of Metropolitans of St. Petersburg. I hope that our fraternal talks and prayers together at shrines in St. Petersburg will serve as a source of spiritual joy for you. I wish you, Your Beatitude, God's help in your work for the good of the Church of Christ and good health. May our love in Christ and mutual support bring good fruits for the glory of the Lord and help us in our service of Holy Orthodoxy'.

Archbishop Ieronymos said in response, 'I, just as my honourable co-workers, have repeatedly said this during this visit: Blessed is God and wonderful are your deeds, O Lord! We, representatives of the Church of Greece, are making an official visit to the Russian Orthodox Church. Throughout history, relations between our nations have always been solid and fruitful. In hard times, Greek clergy and people of faith would help the Russian Church. Russia, in her turn, has always supported and understood us when we experienced hard times. We thank our beloved brother, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, for having given us an opportunity to experience fellowship in these blessed days'.

His Beatitude Ieronymos expressed gratitude for warm welcome during his pilgrimage to St. Petersburg. 'We are leaving filled with the feeling of gratitude and joy. All we have seen here will be sealed in our hearts', he said.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, addressing the participants in the festivities, said, 'I would like in

the first place to warmly greet you, Your Beatitude, in this city on the Neva which is the northern capital of our state and one of the synodal capitals of the Russian Orthodox Church – the cities in which the Holy Synod meets at least one a year. You saw this city several decades ago when you came here as quite a young man. Yesterday, as you visited the city's churches and travelled along the Neva, you could see the good changes that have happened in the life of the northern capital, which reflect as in a mirror the changes that have happened in our county. The magnificent cathedrals of St. Petersburg, which, fortunately, were not blown up but closed for decades or turned into museums of atheism, now fulfil their original function as churches to which thousands of people come for communion with God. In this revival of church life in St. Petersburg, a great role was played by His Eminence Metropolitan Vladimir, whose birthday we together celebrate today'.

His Eminence Hilarion greeted the Primate of the Church of Greece and his fellow-travellers on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and expressed the wish that the remaining days of His Beatitude's visit to Russia may be useful and blessed.

On behalf of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated Metropolitan Vladimir of Ladoga and St. Petersburg on his birthday, saying, 'I would like to express the wish that you, dear Metropolitan, may head the Metropolis of St. Petersburg for many more years. I wish that the Lord may give you spiritual and physical strength so that together we could continue working in the Holy Synod and helping His Holiness our Patriarch. May the Lord preserve you for many good years!'

After the repast, the Primate of the Greek Church visited the necropolis of St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura to say the Prayer for the Dead at the grave of great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky.

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