Metropolitan Hilarion begins his visit to Belarus

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Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, arrived in Minsk in the evening of March 4, 2012, at the invitation of Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus, and with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Meeting Metropolitan Hilarion at the international airport in Minsk were Archbishop Guriy of Novogrudok and Lida, chancellor of the Byelorussian Exarchate; archpriest Feodor Povnyi, rector of the Church of All Saints in the capital of Belarus; and archpriest Aleksandr Bolonnikov, secretary of the Academic Board of the Minsk Theological Seminary named after St. Cyril of Turov.

They proceeded to the Charity House of the Byelorussian Exarchate. Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Church of St. Job the Much-Suffering and met with the parishioners and staff of the Charity House.

On March 5, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Cathedral of the Descent of the Holy Spirit and venerated its relics. After that the DECR chairman proceeded to St. Elizabeth's Convent, where he was met by father-confessor, archpriest Andrei Lemeshonok; mother superior, hegumeness Evfrosynia (Laptik), sisters, and parishioners.

At the Church of the "Reigning" Icon of the Mother of God, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers with archpastoral homily. He wholeheartedly greeted Archbishop Guriy, who accompanied him, mother superior and the sisters and wished them God's help in their ministry.

Metropolitan Hilarion saw the churches and convents' premises, met and talked with sisters, and get acquainted with the life and social work of the convent. Later in the day he visited the Minsk Diocesan Administration, where Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus warmly welcomed him and gave dinner in honour of the high guests and his suite.

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