Metropolitan Hilarion arrives in Holy Mount Athos

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On December 14th, 2011, Metropolitan Hilarion began his pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain of Athos.

Metropolitan Hilarion is accompanied by archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; protodeacon Alexiy Trunin; hierodeacon Ioann (Kopeikin), assistant to the DECR chairman; Leonid Sevastianov, executive director of the St. Gregory the Theologian Charity Foundation; and DECR staff members Anatoly Churyakov and Feodor Shulga.

On the first day of his pilgrimage Metropolitan Hilarion venerated the miraculous icon of the Mother of God called “She Who is Quick to Hearken” in the Dochiariou Monastery and visited the Transfiguration cell where he conversed with Fr Joseph, head of the Pilgrims’ centre of the New Esfigmenou.

That same day in the evening, the pilgrims arrived in the Iviron Monastery and were met by its hegumen and the brethren. Metropolitan Hilarion read Akathistos hymn in the Greek language before the miraculous Iviron icon of the Mother of God.

The pilgrims had a long talk about spiritual life with archimandrite Baselios Iveritis, a well-known theologian and ascetic, who was at the outset of the revival of monastic life on Mt. Athos in the 1960s and used to be hegumen of the Stavronikita and Iviron Monasteries. Taking part in the talk was archimandrite Nathanael, hegumen of the Iviron Monastery.

Metropolitan Hilarion remarked that he visits the monasteries of the Holy Mount every year. Grace is most strongly felt here thanks to the holy sites, spiritual traditions and special protection of the Mother of God of the monks.

Archimandrite Baselios shared his understanding of the profound religiosity of Russian culture and Russian spiritual tradition. Discussed was the influence of the writings of St. Isaac the Syrian on Fyodor Dostoevsky. The elder said that for him all Dostoevsky’s works are commentaries to St. Isaac the Syrian.

Regarding a dialogue with representatives of other Christian confession, Fr Baselios stated that its objective for an Orthodox participant should be his witness about his inner freedom, faith and love rather than victory over his opponents.

On December 15, Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Iviron icon of the Mother of God. Concelebrating were archimandrite Nathanael, archimandrite Baselios and ordained pilgrims.

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