Metropolitan Hilarion visits Russian State Historical Archives

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On November 1, 2011, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations and rector of the Church Post-Graduate and Doctoral School, who is on a visit to St. Petersburg with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and at the invitation of Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, visited the Russian State Historical Archives.

The invitation to visit the largest state depository of documents on church history came from the RSHA director A. Sokolov back in 2010. Metropolitan Hilarion arrived at the archives together with DECR vice-chairman Hegumen Philaret (Bulekov), Mr. L. Sevastyanov, executive director of the St. Gregory the Theologian Charity, and Mr. A. Mramornov, secretary of the Church Post-Graduate School's academic council. They were welcome at the entrance to the archives building by the RSHA deputy director E. Miletin.

Metropolitan Hilarion and his party proceeded to the hall for official receptions to sign an agreement on cooperation between the RSHA and the Church Post-Graduate School.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion saw the depositories in which office records of almost two-century's work of the Sacred Governing Synod are collected. In the repository, His Eminence made the following remarks for journalists:

'Represented in archives documentarily is the Synodal period in the history of the Russian Church – the time when we had no patriarchal office and the Church was governed by the emperor through the Sacred Governing Synod. Collected in the RSHA are the whole archives of its chancellery.

Certainly, The Russian State Historical Archives keeps the most valuable materials on diverse themes of history. Sometimes one can find documents here which re-enact events accurate to a few months or even hours. I happened to work in the RSHA in the early 2000s when I wrote a book on the Onomatological Dispute since all the documents on this subject are found here.

In this sense the archives is the most valuable source of information, especially for historians but also for theologians and for all those who are interested in our past. The materials collected here refute the opinion that the Synodal period was a time of a certain stagnation or decay in the life of the Russian

Church and that the Church was a mere state department at that time. In fact, she lived a full-blooded time and this is reflected in the materials of the archives. In those years there lived great luminaries, saints, theologians and in spite of the fact that the Church was not canonically headed by the First Hierarch at that time, she lived, I repeat, a full life.

Today, many researchers including post-graduate students of the Church Post-Graduate and Doctoral School work on various historical themes and it is very important that they should have an access to the archives.

Today I have signed a cooperation agreement with the leaders of the archives, which I believe will make easier the life of historians to be and will contribute to the emergence of objective and competent works unfolding various pages of our history. I believe, really competent and objective can be the work of only that historian who will give himself the trouble to devote time and perhaps even long years to the work with archive materials'.

DECR Communication Service

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