



Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates Divine Liturgy at the Russian Convent of St. Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane

On Sunday, 28 August, the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), celebrated Divine Liturgy at the Russian Convent of St. Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane (Jerusalem).

Concelebrating were Bishop Theodosius of Seattle (Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia), archimandrite Isidor (Minayev), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem; archimandrite Tikhon, head of the ROCOR Ecclesiastical Mission; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; hierodeacon Ioann (Kopeikin), assistant to the DECR chairman, and the assembly of clerics from the Moscow Patriarchate and from far abroad countries.

Bishop Theodosius greeted Metropolitan Hilarion after the divine service and presented him with the Shroud of the Most Holy Mother of God.

The DECR chairman thanked the archpastor and addressed the worshippers, emphasizing that it was a great joy for pilgrims from Russia to celebrate in Gethsemane, where the Lord Jesus Christ prayed to His Heavenly Father before His suffering on the Cross and where the Mother of God found a place for the rest of her body for a short time before being taken to Heaven by her Son. Metropolitan Hilarion spoke in length of the Dormition, saying *inter alia* that it reminds us of man's creation for life eternal.

"Let us beseech the Most Holy Mother of God to help us on our way to salvation and pray to the Lord to give us strength to feel our closeness to God every day and every hour as we feel it here in the Holy Land," Metropolitan Hilarion said.

He presented Mother Superior and the sisters with an icon of St. Isaac of Syria with inscription.