Metropolitan Hilarion visits Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and holy places in Jerusalem

On August 25, 2011, after his meeting with Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem, DECR chairman Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, proceeded to the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. He was accompanied by Archimandrite Isidore Minaev, head of the Mission, Hegumen Feofan Lukyanov, deputy head of the Mission, and his delegation.

At the central gates, the DECR chairman was welcomed by sisters of the Gorneye Convent singing hymns. His Eminence proceeded to the church of the Trinity, bowed at the holy altar and then greeted the head and the staff of the Mission, saying,

> 'I am very glad to visit the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission for the first time in my capacity as chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, not for the first time in my life though. I remember stepping over the threshold of the Mission many years ago when I, a young Hieromonk and Oxford student, came to the Holy Land to venerate the places where our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ lived and preached and where He assumed suffering for the salvation of the human race. In 2000, I had the good fortune to accompany His Holiness Patriarch Alexy during the celebrations marking the 2000th anniversary of the Nativity of Christ and to visit the Russian Orthodox Mission together with the Patriarch and his delegation.
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> Today I have come here with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to meet with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem and to discuss with him our bilateral relations. And I am glad that this visit coincides with the afterfeast of the Holy Transfiguration of the afterfeast of the Dormition of our Most Holy Virgin Mary.
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> The Holy Land has a special magnetic force for the Russian people. It is not accidental that thousands of pilgrims used to walk to Jerusalem in old times, when it was impossible to reach by other means, overcoming distances and obstacles. Today, pilgrims come from various countries, including those within the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church, to venerate these holy places, to walk in the steps of the Saviour, the Most Holy Mother of God and the apostles and to visit the Holy City, the land, where 2000 years ago the history of our Church began.
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> We all experience deep emotions when we come to this holy city. I would like to wish you, Father

Isidore, God’s help in the important task you fulfil in the Holy Land as head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission. I wish God’s help to all brothers and sisters who work here. May God’s blessing be with you all and may the Most Holy Mother of God protect you against every evil by her honourable protecting veil’.

On the same day Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Lord’s Sepulcher, Golgotha and Gethsemane as well the Zion Upper Room in which the Last Supper had been celebrated.

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