Metropolitan Hilarion concelebrates with Patriarch Bartholomew in Gökçeada (Imbros) Island

[gallery columns="2"]

On August 23, 2011, pending his stay in the Island of Gökçeada (Imbros), Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, assisted His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in celebrating the Divine Liturgy at the church of the Assumption at His Holiness's native village of Holy Theodore.

Among the Patriarch's concelebrants were also Bishop Nikandros of Doria, Archimandrite Bartholomew Samaras, chief secretary of the Patriarch of Constantinople's Synod, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and other clergy. Among the worshippers were Metropolitans Chrysostom of Myra in Lycia and Cyril of Imbros and Tenedos.

After the service Patriarch Bartholomew warmly greeted Metropolitan Hilarion and his party, pointing to the special importance that the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations has in the cause of consolidating inter-Orthodox unity. The DECR chairman responded saying,

'Your Holiness, in the first place I would like to convey to you words of greetings and to your flock a blessing from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. From myself I would like to thank you for the three days I have spent together with you in your native island and for the opportunity to come in touch with the life of Christians who, despite difficult historical circumstances, have remained here and preserved their commitment to Christ and are supporting today the shrines of their native land with their prayers.

Among those present here are many of those who were born and raised on Imbros but later had to leave their homeland. Today, living in other countries and cities, they preserve their love of their native island and its holy places and come here every summer to support Holy Orthodoxy here.

This island, just as many other islands and lands, experienced difficult times. In the life of Christians in this island there were many sad and tragic pages. And it is not accidental that only a small remnant of once numerous Christian population has remained here. But one should never lose hope but remember that the power of God is accomplished in human weakness.

The Russian Orthodox Church has gone through a 70 year-long experience of most severe persecutions when there was the task to destroy it. But the Lord proved to be stronger than human devices, as after the seven decades of persecution and oppression our Church has resurrected to develop and grow today.

In our days, alarming reports are coming from various parts of the world where Christians are subjected to persecution. Hardly a day goes by without reports coming that a priest was killed at some place or a bomb exploded in a Christian church at another place or groups of Christians were persecuted in yet another place. It is obvious for many today that it is precisely Christians who are the most persecuted religious group in a number of regions in the world. Alarming news come from some countries in the Middle East where Christians for centuries have lived side by side with people of other religions but now there to their very survival there has come under a threat.

In this situation, inter-Christian solidarity becomes especially important. Forgetting about our differences, we, Christians of different confessions, should lend a helping hand to each other. A special mission is placed on the Orthodox Church, for she has preserved intact the faith that was handed down to her by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and His apostles. Today as never before, it is important that Orthodox Christians should be united and all the Local Orthodox Churches should show solidarity. Let us join our efforts and forget about minor differences on particular issues which still remain unsettled in relations between Orthodox Churches.

Today the voice of Orthodoxy should be heard throughout the world. It should be a united and joint voice, the voice of a Church which has survived centuries of persecution and, despite all the tragic circumstances in her life in various countries and in various times, has preserved the truth of Christ unimpaired.

Your Holiness, allow me to wish you God's help in your important service as primate of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople. Allow me to offer you warm congratulations on the 50th anniversary of your ordination, for exactly this day 50 years ago you were ordained deacon in this island. Since that time you have been carrying out in a dignified way the lofty service to which the Lord has chosen you.

May the Lord preserve Your Holiness and your God-saved flock for many and good years. Ispola eti despota!'

As a token of his visit to Imbros, Metropolitan Hilarion presented Patriarch Bartholomew with an icon of St. Seraphim of Sarov executed with amber by Russian masters.

On the following day, Metropolitan Hilarion and his delegation left from Istanbul for Israel, where his

meeting with Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem is planned to take place. At Ataturk Airport, the DECR chairman was seen off by Russian Consul General in Istanbul a. Yerkhov.

DECR Communication Service

Photos by Nicholas Manginas

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/55292/