



Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates Divine Liturgy at Athonian Skete of St. Anne

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On October 27, 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, led a pilgrims group of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Skete of St Anne on Holy Mount Athos.

The pilgrims venerated the relics of St. Anne, the mother of the Most Holy Mother of God, and had a lively talk with the head of the skete and its monastic community. Responding to the brethren's welcome, Metropolitan Hilarion thanked them for hospitality and told them about his visit to the skete 18 years ago when he was a young hieromonk. Working in the skete's library, he discovered a manuscript of a Homily by great ascetic St. Simeon the Studite. Later the metropolitan prepared a critical publication of this text in the patrological series *Sources Chretiennes* .

On October 28, Metropolitan Hilarion, assisted by his fellow-pilgrims in holy orders, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the skete's cathedral church. The liturgy was celebrated in Church Slavonic and the singing was performed by the choir of clergy and laymen made up of the pilgrims group members.

The oldest and largest on Mount Athos, the Skete of St. Anne was founded in the 16th century at a steep slope at the height of 350 meters above the sea level. The skete is known for its strict rules. It consists of 35 brotherhoods – cells with 85 monks. It produced a host of new martyrs who suffered for Christ under the Turkish domination. The skete gave rise in the mid-18th century to the movement of the Kolivades who called to return to the patristic tradition of sensible work and frequent communion. Its main shrines are St. Anne's foot and her miracle-working icon with its grace to help barren spouses.

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