



DECR chairman arrives at Xenophontos Monastery on Mount Athos

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On October 24, 2010, during their pilgrimage to Mount Athos, the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation led by DECR chairman, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, arrived at the Xenophontos Monastery dedicated to St. George the Conqueror.

After the divine service, the abbot, Archimandrite Alexis, greeted the guests, saying in particular, 'For our monastic community, your coming is a special blessing. Truly moved, we exclaim, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord* (Mt. 21:9). With humbleness and reverence we are asking for you God-pleasing hierarch's prayers'.

Noting that Mount Athos is a place of silence, consolation, repentance, prayers, feat and perfection in God, the abbot continued, 'The monastic state on Mount Athos owes its uniqueness to the age-old traditions, rich cultural heritage, spiritual atmosphere of hesychasm, modest ascetic life and the beauty of nature around it. It follows the path of overcoming atomocentricity and promotion of universality through the common life and cooperation of people of various nationalities inspired by their common faith and love which God has taught us and which we fulfil in traditional hospitality and charity. All this is an example of gospel's life for the salvation of man and the world'.

Holy Orthodoxy offers to the peoples of the world its saving message, its spiritual power and truth by which it lives and witnesses, he said, adding, 'We speak in different languages but confess one faith which makes us brothers and co-workers in this life'.

In conclusion, addressing the head of the Russian delegation, Metropolitan Hilarion, the abbot said, 'We filially wish that this pilgrimage may attract the grace and blessing of the Mother of God on you personally and on your honourable fellow-travellers and on the chosen friendly Russian Orthodox people who adorned themselves with a countless martyrs and confessors in the last century. Please pray, Your Eminence, that we may be granted the mercy of God and His Heavenly Kingdom'.

As a token of the Russian Orthodox delegation's visit, the abbot presented them with an icon of St. George, the patron of the monastery, painted by one of the brethren.

Metropolitan Hilarion, speaking in response on behalf of the pilgrims, said,

'Holy Father Abbot, Beloved in Christ Fathers and Brethren, the Holy Mountain is a unique place to where Orthodox monks flock from all parts of the world to lift up prayers for the whole world. Each ascetic learns to live a monastic life and makes his own contribution to the formation of the Athonite monastic tradition. From here it is spread to all parts of the Orthodox world. Whenever we come to Mount Athos, we experience a spiritual joy from communion in prayer with you. Through you we partake of the Athonite monastic spirit. Here we can also touch material treasures of Orthodoxy which have been accumulated through centuries and cherished by Athonite monks. These are sacred relics, icons, frescoes and patristic manuscripts. Pilgrims are especially attracted by the way of monastic life here with its strict order and paramount church prayer.

The Russian Orthodox Church has always had special relations with Mount Athos. What brings us together is the protection of St. George the Conqueror. By divine providence, St. George has become the patron of the Russian State; his icon is placed in the center of Russian National Emblem; he is also the patron of the Russian army. But here, through his intercession, he gives you victories in an invisible spiritual battle, which is the destiny of every monk.

Once again, thank you for sharing in prayer. I call you to pray for the Russian Church who loves you'.

After a common meal, the guests were invited to the assembly hall of the monastery, where they were received in audience by the abbot and the eldest monks. The abbot told them the history of the monastery and shared memories of his visit to the Russian Orthodox Church as member of an Athonite monasteries' delegation in 1985. Metropolitan Hilarion spoke of the present situation of the Russian Church as well as its service and the renewal of monastic life in it. As a token of this visit the DECR chairman handed over to the monastery's library a set of photo-albums 'Russian Monasteries'.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion had a talk with Abbot Alexis in his chambers. They discussed the present state of monastic life on Mount Athos. Father Abbot asked the metropolitan to convey a deep bow to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and expressed hope that the patriarch would visit his monastery during his future visit to Mount Athos.

DECR Communication Service

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