



## **Sea cruise to mark 90th anniversary of Russian Army's exodus from Crimea begins with prayer**

[gallery]

On July 13, 2010, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, a prayer service was held at the Grand Cathedral of the Donskoy monastery before the beginning of a sea cruise devoted to the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Army units' and civil refugees' exodus from the Crimea. The prayer service for travelers was conducted by the abbot of the monastery, Hegumen Luka Ionov.

Before the beginning of the cruise, the travelers had a blessing administered to a copy of the Icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker, which hangs over the St. Nicholas tower gate of the Moscow Kremlin. The copy was bricked up under the Soviet regime to be recovered only in July 2010. The participants in the cruise will take the icon with them for their journey.

After the service, Mr. M. Yakushev, vice-president of the St. Andrew-the-First-Called Foundation, told the congregation about the tasks of the sea pilgrimage. He pointed to the special symbolism of the fact that the copy of the Icon of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker was blessed precisely in the Donskoy monastery in which the relics of St. Tikhon lie in rest. After the Kremlin came under fire in 1917, it was Patriarch Tikhon who handed over to A. Kolchak, head of the anti-Bolshevik armed forces, the copy of the icon over the St. Nicholas tower gates, which came to be called 'St. Nicholas the Wounded'. Mr. Yakushev stressed that the sea cruise will be partly an academic expedition. There will be lectures, round-table conference and discussion on board concerning the themes of the unity of Russia state history.

The commemoration action will end on July 25, the Day of the Navy, in Sevastopol from which Russian Army units had left for foreign lands. On this day, a monument to St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker will be opened at the St. Nicholas Square in Sevastopol and the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated in St. Vladimir's in Kherson.

After the prayers service the participants venerated the Donskoy Icon of the Mother of God and the relics of St. Tikhon.

The Department for External Church Relations will be represented in the sea cruise by Hegumen Philip Riabykh, DECR vice-chairman and member of the Russian World program's patrons board.

