



## Metropolitan Hilarion completes pilgrimage to Cappadocia

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On 27-28 June 2010, a group of pilgrims led by His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople continued visits to the ancient monasteries and churches in Cappadocia.

On June 27, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, accompanied by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Gabriel of Comana (Patriarchate of Constantinople); the DECR deputy chairman Archpriest Nikolai Balashov; and Archimandrite Bessarion (Komzias) visited the Church of St. John the Baptist in Gulşehir (Aravisos). The church was built in the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries and decorated with extent frescoes in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The pilgrims sang the troparion to St. John the Baptist in the Greek language and the troparion for the Resurrection of Christ in Slavonic.

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew said that in 2007 he visited this church together with Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (now His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia) and celebrated an evening service here.

The delegation visited the Church of St. Demetrius of Thessalonica located in the same village. Many Orthodox Christians who arrived from Greece and representatives of local authorities met the pilgrims. They looked over the remains of the church and sang troparion to St. Demetrius.

On June 28, the group continued their pilgrimage. His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and his companions visited the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Nevşehir (Neapoli) built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church was desolated in the 1920s and later turned into prison. The prison was transferred to another place in 1986, yet the church is still neglected.

The similar lot had befallen the Church of St. Gregory the New. It was turned into a school at first and later neglected. The relics of St. Gregory were transferred to Athens in 1924.

The pilgrims saw other churches and cave monasteries in Cappadocia, including the cave church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the Church of St. Gregory the Theologian (18<sup>th</sup> c.), and other Christian holy sites.

That same day in the evening the group of pilgrims left Cappadocia for Istanbul. Metropolitan Hilarion

and his suite left Istanbul for Moscow in the morning of June 29.

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