Metropolitan Hilarion begins his visit to Italy

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Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, arrived in Italy on 14 May 2010.

The welcoming party at the Bologna airport included Archimandrite Mark Davitti, rector of the ROC church of St. Basil the Great, Hegumen Philip Vasiltsev of the church of St. Catherine in Rome and Prof. Lino Britto of the University of Bologna.

Accompanied by Archimandrite Mark, Metropolitan Hilarion visited the church of St. Basil the Great, where he was given a warm welcome by the clergy and parishioners.

Then the DECR chairman proceeded to the Cathedral of San Pietro. He was welcomed there by Mgr. Stefano Ottani, who showed to His Eminence and his party the cathedral's main shrines. The guests venerated the relics of St. Anne, the mother of the Mother of God, and sang 'It is meet and right…' before the miracle-working icon of the Mother of God from the 11th century, which had been brought to San Pietro from Byzantium.

After that Metropolitan Hilarion visited the Basilica of St. Petronius to pray at the relics of early Christian martyrs and New Jerusalem, the 5th century church compound where there are the relics of Holy Martyrs Vitalius and Agricola and a part of the relics of Protomartyr Catherine.

In the evening His Eminence and his party departed for Ravenna.

The DECR chairman is accompanied during his trip to Italy by Rev. Dimitry Sizonenko, acting secretary for inter-Christian relations, Mr. L. Sevastyanov, an assistant to the DECR chairman, as well as Deacon Ioann Guaita and Hierodeacon Ioann Kopeikin, DECR staff members.

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