



## **Church academic conference devoted to 125th anniversary of the death of Bishop Porfiry Uspensky held in Moscow**

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A church academic conference on An Historian of the Christian East. Towards the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Death of Bishop Porfiry Uspensky took place on 19 April 2010 at the Moscow Patriarchate's Pilgrimage Center. It was organized by the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society (IOPS) and the Pilgrimage Center.

In the morning before the conference started, a requiem service was said at the New Monastery of Our Saviour for Bishop Porfiry of Chigirin, who headed the Russian Orthodox Mission in Jerusalem from 1847 to 1854. Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, IOPS deputy head, laid a wreath at Bishop Porfiry's grave on behalf of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society.

Among the participants in the conference were Archbishop Mark, N. Lisovoy, a leading researcher of the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Russian History, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman and IOPS member, S. Zhitenev, Pilgrimage Center director, M. Bibikov, director of the Russian Academy of Science's center for history of Eastern Christian culture, S. Chapnin, editor-in-chief of Zhurnal Moskovskoy Patriarii, and V. Lebedev, chairman of the Union of Russia's Orthodox Citizens.

Opening the conference, Archbishop Mark spoke about the legacy of Bishop Porfiry and the significance of his work for the Russian Orthodox Church, her presence in the Holy Land and development of relations with Oriental Churches.

A message of greetings from IOPS chairman S. Stephashin was read out. It stated in particular, 'Today we honour the memory of this outstanding church worker who was deeply aware of the indissoluble historical spiritual ties between Russia and the Orthodox East and played an outstanding role in the development of Russian presence in the Holy Land, in the countries of the biblical region and in the organization of Russian pilgrimage to holy places held dear by Orthodoxy. The research works of Bishop Porfiry reveal the spiritual treasures of Palestine and ancient Patriarchates of the East. These priceless works on church history and manuscripts, icons and documents he collected generate interest in and love for the Christian East and sacred monuments of Biblical antiquity. By the will of his heart and mind, Bishop Porfiry carried out a tremendous religious educational work and was instrumental in

opening Greek-Arab schools and theological colleges in Palestine and Syria, the first printing shop in Jerusalem, in which books in Arabic and Greek were printed, and concerned himself with the Orthodox Arab population’.

Mr. Lisovoy presented a key paper on Russian Church Policy in the East: Two Concepts, Two Misunderstandings. A Space of ‘White Crows’. He recalled the complex history of interaction between the Sacred Synod, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire and Local Orthodox Churches and Orthodox Christians in the Middle East. He also spoke about the role of Bishop Porfiry, his personality and his characteristic creative approach to overcoming bureaucratic limitations so typical for church and state leaders of that time.

Archpriest Alexy Marchenko from Perm spoke about Archimandrite Porfiry as a critique of Athonite traditions. Among other speakers were Ms. I. Smirnova of the Institute of the Logic, Cognitology and Development of the Personality, who presented a paper on Archimandrite Porfiry and Sainted Hierarch Filaret Drozdov; and A. Khokhlov of the RAS Institute of Oriental Studies, who spoke of the first review written on Bishop Porfiry’s works on the Christian East.

In conclusion of the conference, Mr. K. Vakh, general director of the Indrik Publishers, presented to the participants photographs of Jerusalem from Bishop Porfiry’s collection.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photos by the Moscow Patriarchate Pilgrimage Center’s press service*