



Russian President venerates the Saviour's Crown of Thorns

[gallery]

On March 2, 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Ms. Medvedev venerated the Saviour's Crown of Thorns, the piece of the Lord's Cross and the Nail from the Lord's Cross kept in the Notre Dame Cathedral. These shrines were brought from Constantinople to Paris by Louis IX, the King of France, in 1239. The piece of the Cross happened to come to the French capital from Rome.

For the first time in the history of modern Russia, a head of the state prayed at this common Christian shrine. Emperor Nicholas II and his wife prayed at it in 1895. Like nearly a hundred years ago, the head of the Russian State was welcomed by the ringing of all the bells and a solemn procession of the cathedral's clergy. The main gates of the church were opened for the occasion.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, said a prayer at the Crown of Thorns. Praying together with him and the high guests were Archbishop Innokenty of Korsun, Hegumen Philip Riabykh, DECR vice-chairman, Hegumen Philaret Bulekov, Moscow Patriarchate representative to the Council of Europe, Archpriest Antony Ilyin, acting representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to European international organizations, Hegumen Nestor Sirotenko, rector of the Church Representation of the Three Hierarchs, Hieromonk Alexander Sinyakov, rector of Paris Orthodox Seminary, and clergy of the Korsun diocese. The singing was performed by the choir of Paris Orthodox Seminary.

The Catholic Church was represented by the Right Rev. Jérôme Beau, auxiliary bishop of Paris, Msgr. Patrick Jacquin, rector of the cathedral, local clergy and knights of the Order of Holy Sepulcher.

After the prayer and veneration of the Crown of Thorns, Mr. Medvedev thanked the congregation, saying, 'I would like to express sincere gratitude for the opportunity to visit the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris and venerate the shrines found here. For me as President of the Russian Federation, it is a great honour. For me as a man of Christian faith, it is an opportunity to touch some specially venerated shrines. I very much hope that the meetings of this kind will help us strengthen peace and mutual understanding and contribute to better relations between our countries and to contacts between Churches'.

Then the Russian President and his wife proceeded to the Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir. In 2007 this icon was given to the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris by the late Patriarch Alexy II during his historic

visit to France.

In memory of his visit to the cathedral, Mr. Medvedev presented it with an ancient icon bearing an image of the Saviour in a crown of thorns.

On his way from the church the president came up to the Parisians who assembled in the cathedral square to greet him.

DECR Communication Service

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