



## Archbishop Hilarion visits former Cathedral of St. Sophia and city cemetery in Harbin

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Archbishop Hilarion and the delegation, who came to China at the invitation of the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, visited on 19 November 2009 the Cathedral of St. Sophia and the city cemetery in Harbin. They were accompanied by Russian General Consul in Shenyang S. Podberezko and Director of the Fourth Department of the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, Lu Zinguan.

The Cathedral of St. Sophia now accommodates a Museum of the History of Harbin. The church was built in 1907 and was used for divine service until the work of the Chinese Autonomous Orthodox Church was made difficult for historical reasons.

At the city cemetery, Archbishop Hilarion laid flowers at the Memorial of Soviet Soldiers who fell during the liberation of North-Eastern China from the Japanese occupation in 1945. The memorial used to be in the Assumption Cemetery in Harbin where there is a city park now. In 2007 the remains of Russian soldiers were transferred in a solemn ceremony to the place of their present repose. The delegation honoured their memory by singing 'Eternal Life'.

Then the archbishop and the delegation proceeded to the Chapel of St. John the Baptist built in 1995 in the Orthodox part of the cemetery. His Eminence Hilarion lifted up a prayer for the repose of all the Orthodox Christians buried there. Then they visited the graves of Orthodox clergy including the last priest in Harbin, Father Gregory Chu Shipu, where they said a prayer for the repose of the souls of all the dead clergy.

*DECR Communication Service*