



## Archbishop Hilarion visits the Visoki Decani Monastery

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On 29 October 2009, the Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, on a visit to Kosovo and Metochia at the invitation of Bishop Artemije of Raska-Prizren and Kosovo-Metochia, visited the old Visoki Decani Monastery.

The hierarchs and their suite were met by the abbot, Bishop Teodosije of Lipljana with the brethren.

Archbishop Hilarion and Bishops Artemije and Teodosije proceeded to the Church of the Ascension and venerated the relics of St. Stephen of Decani. The DECR Chairman conveyed greeting from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the brethren. "The Russian Orthodox Church loves the Serbian Orthodox Church and the entire much-suffered Serbian people, but especially our brothers and sisters experiencing a difficult time in Kosovo and Metochia," Archbishop Hilarion emphasized.

"I see the churches that were intact ten years ago, but are defiled and destroyed now. The Visoki Decani Monastery has survived by God's grace. You, the brethren of the monastery lead by Bishop Teodosije are the custodians of this holy place and of the Orthodox faith. Your exploit is exploit of confession. Your faith is seen first of all in your staying here and enduring sorrows. You are carrying the heavy but gracious cross that the Lord has placed upon you.

"The Decani Monastery will live as long as the monks abide in it. Faith and prayer are our weapon. Neither submachine or pistols, nor armoured fighting vehicles or tanks can defend this holy place, but your steadfast faith will preserve it for centuries."

The DECR Chairman wished Bishops Artemije and Teodosije "God's help and strong spirit in their ministry" and called the brethren "to remember the high responsibility the Lord has placed on all monks."

Bishop Artemije underscored that 'Christians of Kosovo and Metochia endure all things the Lord send them for the salvation of their souls and thank God for them and thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and all the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church for their brotherly love and support.

Archbishop Hilarion talked with the abbot and the brethren and saw the famous frescoes of the Church of the Ascension built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century as well as the entire monastery by the holy Prince Stephen whose relics have always been kept in the Visoki Decani Monastery.

