# Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk begins his visit to Kosovo and Metochia

[gallery order="DESC"]

On 27 October 2009, the Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk arrived in Kosovo and Metochia at the invitation of the Raska-Prizren diocese of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Archbishop Hilarion was met at the airport by Bishop Artemije of Raska-Prizren and Kosovo-Metochia. The hierarchs, accompanied by the international peace forces proceeded to the convent of the Assumption of the Mother of God in the village of Gracanica, the present centre of Orthodoxy in the land of Kosovo. The DECR Chairman was greeted by the clerics and nuns led by hegumeness Euphrosynia.

Having venerated the holy sites of the monastery, Archbishop Hilarion addressed the Serbian hierarch, clergymen and sisters, saying, "I have arrived here to venerate the holy sites of the land that is the cradle of Orthodox Christianity in the Balkans, where the great saints shone forth and where the defenders of the Orthodox faith shed their blood. Many churches and monasteries in their land bear witness to the people who lived and worked here. The Russian Orthodox Church has always been and will be with the Serbian Orthodox Church in all her sorrows and privations. When the bombardment of the former Republic of Yugoslavia began, His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of the blessed memory visited Belgrade and celebrated the Divine Liturgy together with His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia thus rendering aid to the Serbian people in the disaster that had fallen upon them.

"His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, at that time a metropolitan and the DECR Chairman, visited Belgrade to meet with the government officials and discuss how to secure a cease-fire. I accompanied Metropolitan Kirill and saw the horror of the tragedy.

"The present visit is my first visit to Kosovo. I came to venerate the Orthodox shrines of Kosovo and Metochia, to share your sorrows, and to pray with you for peace and spiritual unity of our people.

"Dear Vladyka Artemije, I wish you God's help in your ministry. I wish all brothers and sisters steadfastness in the faith. Do not abandon this land! As long as you stay here, the Orthodox faith will live in this much suffered land, and the Lord will bestow His grace upon you."

Bishop Artemije addressed the DECR Chairman with the following words, " Dear Vladyka, I thank God

for the joy that you have brought us. We are grateful to the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian people for your being with us. Our unity has existed for centuries, as we are one people of one blood, who have one faith.

The Lord has vouchsafed me to visit Russia several times and to feel the soul of the Russian people and their fraternal love to the Serbian people.

Your visit, dear Vladyka, bears witness to your love and care. We would like you to feel at home as you are among your loyal and loving brothers."

Bishop Artemije presented Archbishop Hilarion with a symbolic gift – a national string instrument that can be found in all Serbian houses.

---

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/58338/