Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Representation of the Orthodox Church of Antioch in Moscow



On July 26th, 2021, on the feast day of the Synaxis of Archangel Gabriel, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Archangel Gabriel – a Metochion of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Moscow.

Concelebrating with the archpastor were Metropolitan Niphon of Filippopolis, rector of the Metochion and the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Bishop Anthony of Moravici, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), the rector of the Metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Beirut, and the clergy of the Metochion.

The deacons were headed by the Archdeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, Assistant to the DECR Chairman.

The festive Divine service was celebrated in Church Slavonic and Arabic.

During the Litany of Fervent Supplication, petitions were offered up for deliverance of the coronavirus infection.

After the Litany, Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up a prayer recited at the time of the spread of baneful pestilence.

At the end of the Liturgy, a moleben to the Holy Archangel Gabriel was performed in the open air in the courtyard of the church.

The prayer service was attended by the heads of diplomatic missions of the United States, Syria, Colombia, Albania, Bahrain, Gabon, Latvia, Portugal, Yemen, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Ghana, Italy, Denmark, Ireland, France, Montenegro, Poland, Switzerland, Apostolic Nuncio to the Russian Federation Archbishop Giovanni D'Aniello, representatives of the embassies of Jordan, Qatar, Lebanon, Switzerland, representative of the Community of St. Egidius in Moscow Alessandro Salacone, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR A. A. Bessmertnykh.

At the end of the prayer service, Metropolitan Hilarion was addressed by Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis. Welcoming the DECR Chairman, Metropolitan Niphon, in particular, said:

"Your Eminence!

I sincerely thank you for sharing the joy of today's feast with us, bringing us the blessing and congratulations of the head of the Russian Church, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. We ask you to convey to the Primate of the Russian Church our love and gratitude for his fatherly attention.

In turn, I am pleased to convey to you and all those present here the love of our Patriarch of Antioch, His Beatitude John X.

Now glorifying the Archangel Gabriel, we live by the Gospel mystery of the extraordinary love of God. God loves us, and wants us to imitate Him in love for all people, so that His glory would shine throughout the world.

The essence of the ministry of the Archangel Gabriel is the fulfillment of the will of God. In the same way, we are called to fulfill the will of God – this is our freedom, joy, peace and victory over evil.

We prayed that through the intercession of the Archangel Gabriel, the Lord would save us fr om troubles and, in particular, fr om the epidemic, which in many ways changed our usual life. There is a lot of darkness in this world, but we believe that "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5).

I thank you once again, Your Eminence, for today's Divine service, wh ere we testified together about the unity of our Churches in the spirit of love and peace."

In memory of the joint divine service, Bishop Niphon presented Metropolitan Hilarion and Bishop Anthony with holy panagias, and Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev) with a memorial cross.

In his address to the participants of the celebration, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk conveyed to them the greeting and blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations stressed:

"Every year we gather here, at the Antiochian Metochion, to glorify the heavenly patron of this church – the holy Gabriel, Archangel of God.

I very well remember how in the distant Soviet times, when I was a schoolboy and came to this holy church, Archimandrite, and then Bishop Niphon, already served here. All this looked quite unusual in those Soviet times, because there were benches in the church, some diplomats were present, part of the service was performed in unfamiliar languages… But even then, Vladyka Niphon carried out his ministry not only as a representative of the Antiochian Orthodox Church at the Moscow Patriarchal Throne, but also as a pastor.

In conditions when the Church was persecuted, Vladyka managed to do many things that were not available to ordinary Moscow priests, because he was a foreigner, had almost a diplomatic status, and the powerful people of this world shook hands with him. I'm not saying that he enjoyed any immunity, but the atheistic authorities turned a blind eye to many things: to the fact that pastoral work was carried out in this church, to the fact that missionary and charitable activities were carried out here, to the fact that the Sacrament of Holy Baptism was repeatedly performed here, and also to the fact that Vladyka saved icons and iconostases that were subject to destruction or seizure from the Church. Without telling anyone about anything or announcing anything, he himself learned about such cases, and now many icons saved at that time are present in the iconostases of our churches.

Dear Vladyka, I would like to sincerely thank you for this unique, unprecedented, immaculate, long-term service that you are carrying out here. We love you very warmly and cordially. We perceive you as our older brother, from whom we learn a lot.

On this festive day for your church, for the Metochion of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, which you have been heading for more than four decades, I would like to wish you, first of all, health and longevity. I wish you to continue to carry out this important and responsible ministry, which unites our two great Churches – the ancient Church of Antioch, wh ere the apostles Peter and Paul preached, and the younger the Russian Orthodox Church, with still with more than a thousand years of history. May the ties between our two Churches never weaken.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Vladyka Anthony, the representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church, for his long-term and immaculate service and for his presence today – on our common holiday, which once again shows the unity of world Orthodoxy.

This unity cannot be shaken by any erroneous or insidious actions, because the people who commit these actions excommunicate themselves from the unity of Orthodoxy, remove themselves from the diptychs of the Local Orthodox Churches. We, on the other hand, keep our unity. We are strengthening in this unity. We preserve the faith inherited from the generations of our ancestors, we preserve the canonical order, which we did not create and it is not for us to destroy it."

In memory of the joint Divine service, Bishop Hilarion presented Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis with a Holy panagia.

After the service, a festive reception was held at the Courtyard of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, which, in particular, was attended by the heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Moscow.

DECR Communication Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/87799/