Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk celebrates Liturgy at Moscow Metochion of the Serbian Orthodox Church



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On July 12, the commemoration day of the holy glorious and all-laudable apostles Peter and Paul, the Metochion of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Moscow celebrated its patronal feast.

The Divine Liturgy at the church of Ss Peter and Paul located on the bank of the Yauza river was celebrated by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; and Bishop Antonije of Moravica, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Concelebrating with the hierarchs were Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; Archimandrite Serafim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Moscow Patriarchal see; Archpriest Daniel Andreyuk, representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Moscow Patriarchal see; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; and clerics of the church.

Among those attending the service were Mr. Sergei A. Gavrilov, chairman of the RF State Duma Committee on Ownership, Land and Property Relations and president of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy; Mr. Sergei N. Baburin, president of the International Slavic Academy of Sciences, Education, Arts and Culture; H.E. Momčilo Babić, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia to the Russian Federation; H. E. Gelco Samaradjia, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Russian Federation; and Ms Svetlana Sekulovska, charge d'affaires a.i. of the Republic of North Macedonia to the Russian Federation.

The Liturgy being over, the traditional rite of blessing and breaking the kolač was held. It is a common custom in the Balkan countries; a Christian, wishing to honour a saint or a feast, brings bread, wine and koliva (boiled wheat with honey) to church to be consecrated and distributed among worshippers as a blessing.

Then the clergymen and the choir glorified Ss Peter and Paul, singing troparion, kontakion and magnification in front of an icon of the disciples of Christ at the centre of the church.

Metropolitan Anthony heartily congratulated his concelebrants, guests and parishioners on the patronal feast and thanked Bishop Antonije of Moravica for the invitation to share the joy of prayer on this solemn day, saying in particular:

"Dear Vladyka Antonije, I am very happy to be with you today in this holy church on the feast day.

"I would like to convey to you, to Metropolitan Niphon, to clerics and guests the blessing and best wishes of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who is visiting our northern capital. Today he is celebrating at the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul located within the Peter and Paul Fortress. His Holiness knew that we would celebrate at the Metochion of the Serbian Orthodox Church and gave me his blessing to convey his greetings to all of you.

"Today, I would like to tell you, dear Vladyka, that as you have spent a lot of time in Moscow you know and love the Russian Orthodox Church, and you also know that we in Russia love Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church. We are bound by common history, which, regrettably, had often been marked

by bitter circumstances. Yet, come what may, our peoples and our Churches had courageously endured all trials with God's help.

"We sincerely thank the Serbian Orthodox Church for support rendered and being rendered to the Russian Orthodox Church in difficult circumstances it finds itself at present.

"The Primates and hierarchs of the Serbian Church have always been notable for their unwavering commitment to the holy canons and faithfulness to the church order. Dear Vladyka, we are very grateful to you personally and to the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije, and to Serbian bishops for their unanimous support that we feel now, especially in view of the continuing church schism in Ukraine.

"Dear Vladyka, please know that this help has always been and will be reciprocal. We will always do our best to support our fraternal Serbian people and Serbian Church in its salutary ministry.

"We honestly believe and hope that the assembly of the God's saints who have shown forth in our Churches will always be with us along with the help of the holy apostles Peter and Paul to whose prayerful intercession the Metochion of the Serbian Church in Moscow is entrusted.

"I am deeply grateful to you for the invitation and opportunity to pray with you. We celebrated the Divine Liturgy together in Lebanon last autumn thanks to Metropolitan Niphon's hospitality, and today we prayed together at the Serbian Metochion in Moscow."

The DECR chairman presented Bishop Antonije with an icon of St. Savva Storozhevsky in memory of common prayers on the feast day of the first in prominence among the Apostles Ss Peter and Paul and continued to say:

"At one time I had the title of Bishop of Zvenigorod and since then I have deeply venerated St. Savva Storozhevsky, a patron of Russian monasticism. Please, accept the icon of this saint, and let it remind you of our common prayers. May the saint intercede for you at God's throne and be with you in your ministry in the Russian land."

Metropolitan Anthony presented the Patriarchal award, the Order of St. Seraphim of Sarov, 3rd degree, to Branko Vlahović, correspondent of the Belgrade newspaper "Evening News", in consideration of his contribution to the development of relations between the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches and in connection with his 70th birthday.

Bishop Antonije of Moravica thanked the DECR chairman for common prayers and said:

“Vladyka, I ask you to convey our sincere filial gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for his love and prayers for representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches. I have known His Holiness over thirty years, since my time as a student of the Moscow Theological Academy.

“Dear Vladyka, I wish you God’s help in all your labours and especially in those of chairman of the Department for External Church Relations and member of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Lord has vouchsafed you to bear a heavy burden, but we hope for prayers of the saints of God, Ss Peter and Paul, which might make your ministry less difficult and help you to perform it to the glory of Holy Orthodoxy. Many and good years to you.”

Bishop Antonije presented the DECR chairman with a cross and a panagia.

Cross and panagia were presented also to Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Then Bishop Antonije of Moravica cordially greeted Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, Archimandrite Serafim (Shemyatovsky), Archpriest Daniel Andreyuk and guests of honour who attended the Divine service.

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