



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Department for External Church Relations

## **Convent in Maaloula in Syria receives shipment of solar-panel based electrical equipment**



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On 17<sup>th</sup> October at the Patriarchal Convent of St Thecla in Maaloula in Syria there took place the solemn ceremony of the handing over to the convent of a shipment of solar-panel based electrical equipment for the power supply of the church complex and accommodation and administrative buildings, reports the website of the representation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Damascus.

Taking part in the solemn ceremony were the special representative of the president of Russia for the regulation of affairs in Syria A. L. Lavrentiev, the deputy of the Russian presidential administration V.A. Lunkov, the Russian ambassador to Syria A.V. Yefimov, the deputy chairman of the State Duma committee for the Commonwealth of Independent States K.K. Taisaev and the director general of the Boris Yeltsin Presidential Library Yu.S. Nosov.

Taking part on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church was the representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev).

The Russian delegation was met at the gates of the convent by the auxiliary bishop of the Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch the bishop of Larissa Moses, archimandrite Matthew (Ruzouk) and the abbess of the convent Pelagia (Seyaf).

Opening the solemn ceremony, the deputy of the Russian presidential administration V.A. Lunkov spoke of the huge work involved in supplying aid to Syria for the resolution of the humanitarian problems that the Syrian people have had to seriously confront as the harshest stages of military operations come to a close and territories are liberated from terrorists. In particular, the fraternal Syrian people were given large quantities of humanitarian cargo, including food produce, household and hygiene goods, sleeping equipment, school equipment, textbooks and children's toys. "Moreover, taking into account the acute need for electricity supplies for the social infrastructure, the Russian presidential administration has enabled the supply, assembly and exploitation of one-hundred-kilowatt diesel power stations for hospitals in the cities of Deraa and Zabadani," he continued. "In June of this year a visit was organized to the Convent of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Saidnaya, where the convent was presented with a gift of the icon of the Lady of Saidnaya painted in the workshops of St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, and humanitarian aid for orphaned children who are under the care of the convent. More than a thousand packages of school items were given such as books, textbooks and toys for children."

Mr. Lunkov noted that it was at that time that a decision was made to provide electricity using solar panels by the Patriarchal Convent of Saint Thecla in Maaloula, which is one of the oldest monastic houses in the world and a place of special veneration and pilgrimage for millions of Christians throughout Syria and the entire world. During the war the city and the convent suffered greatly from the

barbaric acts of terrorists and the power supply was cut off.

“In August the Russian presidential administration sent here a group of specialists in order to examine the convent, to design a system for the convent’s power supply and to work out the configuration, type and power needed for the assembled equipment,” he said, expressing gratitude to all those who participated in this grand project.

The deputy of the Russian presidential administration presented the Convent of Saint Thecla with all the relevant documentation for its electrical power supply.

“Allow me to greet you, dear brothers and sisters, children of a single Russian-Syrian family,” said in his reply the bishop of Larissa Moses in addressing the members of the Russian delegation on behalf of the Most Blessed Patriarch of Antioch and All the East John X.

Recalling that seven years ago the convent was in ruins as a result of the attacks of terrorists, the bishop emphasized that “on behalf of the people of Syria and the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, headed by the Most Blessed Patriarch John X, we thank the fraternal Russian nation and especially His Excellency the Russian President Vladimir Putin and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, and all those people who have been directly or indirectly involved in the restoration works of this convent.”

Bishop Moses presented gifts to the special representative of the Russian president for the regulation of affairs in Syria A.L. Lavrentiev, the deputy of the Russian presidential administration V.A. Lunkov and the Russian ambassador to Syria A.V. Yefimov.

Then the delegation, accompanied by bishop Moses, archimandrite Matthew, the mother superior of the convent abbess Pelagia and the convent’s sisters, went to the convent’s main church where they venerated the relics of Saint Thecla.

Upon visiting the churches of the convent, the guests were treated to a repast in the convent refectory.

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