



Antiochian Representation in Moscow celebrates 81st birthday of Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis



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On December 4, the feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary into the Temple, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the church of St. Theodore Stratelates - the Representation of the Orthodox Church of Antioch in Moscow. Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' celebrated his birthday on this feast day.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Niphon were Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; Archimandrite Seraphim (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; and clerics of the Representation.

A solemn reception followed, during which its participants congratulated Metropolitan Niphon on his birthday and on the 45th anniversary of his tenure as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Moscow Patriarchal See.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, advisor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev).

Archpriest Nikolay greeted Metropolitan Niphon on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and expressed gratitude of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Metropolitan for his ministry as representative of the Patriarch of Antioch that has helped to consolidate relations between the two Churches and better understand and support each other, and also for his gift of uniting people of different religious and political beliefs and inspiring them to respect the Orthodox Church.

Greeting Metropolitan Niphon were also Mr. Mikhail L. Bogdanov, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation and special presidential representative for the Middle East and Africa; H.E. Chawki Bou Nassar, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Lebanese Republic to the Russian Federation; Mr. Vladimir I. Yakunin, chairman of the Board of Trustees of St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation; Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), H.E. Pierre Levy, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the French Republic to the Russian Federation; and representatives of the Russian and Lebanese public.

The festive occasion was also attended by Mr. Sergei A. Gavrilov, president of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy and chairman of the State Duma Committee on Property, Land and Property Relations; ambassadors and senior diplomats from the embassies of Albania, Bulgaria, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, Greece, Egypt, Italy, Jordan, Yemen, Qatar, Columbia, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Syria, the USA, Tunisia, France, Montenegro; representatives of public organizations, clergymen, and parishioners of the Representation.

Metropolitan Niphon thanked all those present for congratulations and best wishes and said: 'I promise to continue my ministry to the Holy Church honestly and devotedly and do my best for not distorting the image of God in myself, living by Christian values, the greatest of which is love.'

Also, he said: "In the twilight of my life I decided to build a church of the "Unexpected Joy" icon of the Theotokos in my native city of Zahlé in Lebanon. In September 2019, His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch presided at the blessing of the first stone. A delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church, Lebanese top-level officials and ambassadors of foreign countries attended. The consecration of the

church is planned for October 2023.”

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89855/>