Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk visited Plovdiv



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On December 8, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, who is on a visit to Bulgaria for the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Sofia Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, visited the city of Plovdiv.

At the Cathedral of the Holy Great Martyr Marina, His Eminence was welcomed by Metropolitan Nicholas of Plovdiv, Auxiliary Bishops of the Metropolis of Plovdiv - Arseny of Znepol and Vissarion of Smolyan, as well diocesan clergy. Present in the church were Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Bulgaria, Ms E. V. Mitrofanova, with her husband; the city Kmet (mayor) Z. Dimitrov; and Honorary Consul of Russia in Plovdiv Mr. G. Gegrov.

His Eminence Nicholas addressed Metropolitan Anthony with words of greeting noting that the Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches are tied not only by the liturgical, doctrinal and canonical unity shared

by all the Orthodox Churches, but also deep historical relations of mutual aid and solidarity. ‘We are baptized by St. Patriarch Photius and received the word of God directly fr om disciples of Ss Brothers Cyril and Methodius Equal-to-Apostles. When the time was ripe, God had the providence to impart the treasure of the Orthodox faith first to Kiev and from it to the vast lands in the East. At a time so difficult for us, we have received priceless fraternal aid and support back from the Russian Orthodox Church. Our libraries still keep liturgical books printed in Russian by printing houses in the mid-19th century. At every Liturgy in our churches, we plead the Lord Jesus Christ to remember in His Kingdom Emperor Alexander II of blessed memory and all the warriors who fell on battlefield for the faith and liberation of our Motherland. There is hardly any other Orthodox Autocephalous Church that so unequivocally shows her gratitude to your Church, your people and your country’.

He shared his anxiety over the disruption of the unity of world Orthodoxy, which he believes has had as its consequence the tragic events in Ukraine. The hierarch stressed that ecclesiastical disputes can be resolved only through Christian love and canon law.

In conclusion, Metropolitan Nicholas asked to convey his greetings to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, noting that people in Plovdiv will always remember his Holiness’ visit to the city in 2012. In memory of his visit to the metropolis, the hierarch presented his guest with an Icon of St. Clement of Ohrid, whose memory was celebrated on that day.

In his response, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk cordially thanked Metropolitan Nicholas of Plovdiv for the hospitality and shared remembrances of his previous visit to Plovdiv in 2016 with relics of St. Luke, Archbishop of Crimea.

The DECR chairman noted that value and importance of personal communication among hierarchs of Local Churches, especially in the present difficult situation, and solicited prayers for the Russian Orthodox Church and the entire universal Orthodoxy as today it has encountered serious challenges and threats to its unity. ‘Unity is a precious gift the Lord bequeathed us in His last High-Priestly prayer’, His Eminence said and expressed hope that his visit and brotherly fellowship will be another visible sign of friendship, unity and good relations between the two Churches. His Eminence Anthony presented Metropolitan Nicholas with a holy pectoral icon.

Then the DECR chairman and his party were invited to the building of the Metropolis of Plovdiv, wh ere in the chapel dedicated to its founder, St Hermes the Apostle of the Seventy, he venerated the wonder-working Golden Apple Icon of the Mother of God ‘Hodegetria’. The hierarchs continued their fellowship during a brotherly meal.

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