



## **Metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon celebrates birthday at the metochion of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch in Moscow.**



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A reception on the occasion of the 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday of the metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon, the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, was held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at the Moscow metochion of the Church of Antioch.

Delivering speeches of congratulations to metropolitan Niphon were aide to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia archpriest Nikolai Balashov, the special representative of the Russian president to the Middle East and Africa and deputy minister of the Russian foreign ministry M. L. Bogdanov, the ambassador of Lebanon to Russia Sauki bou Nassar, the chairman of the board of trustees of the Saint Andrew the First-Called Vladimir Yakunin and representatives from among Russian and Lebanese public figures.

Father Nikolai, in greeting metropolitan Niphon on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, valued highly the many-years activity of the Moscow representative of the Patriarchal throne of Antioch aimed at strengthening Orthodox unity and the communality of friendly nations, the overcoming of humanity's division into blocs, and at bearing witness to people with different religious and political beliefs of the beauty and transfiguring power of the Orthodox tradition.

The aide to the Patriarch conveyed to metropolitan Niphon the heartfelt congratulations of the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony.

Also attending the reception were ambassadors and representatives of the diplomatic community of Argentina, Bahrein, Belgium, Bulgaria, Gabon, Ghana, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Italy, Portugal, Syria, the USA, Tunisia, Montenegro, the League of Arab States and the European Union, the chairman of the State Duma Committee for property and land S. A. Gavrilov, representatives of public organizations and the clergy and parishioners of the metochion.

Thanking the guests for their congratulations, metropolitan Niphon shared his thoughts on the mission of the Orthodox Church and on the significance of her unity. He also spoke about the progress made on the construction of the church he initiated in his native city of Zahle in Lebanon with the help of donors. The church is in the Russian style and is named in honour of the icon of Our Lady called 'Unexpected Joy'. It is expected that the construction work will be completed in the summer of 2024. It was begun in September 2019 when the Most Blessed Patriarch of Antioch John X consecrated the foundation stone with the participation of a delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church.