



## **Clergy of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission celebrate Liturgy in Bethlehem Grotto of the Nativity**



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On January 4, with the blessing of His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem, Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, officiated at the Divine Liturgy in the Bethlehem Grotto of the Nativity – the birthplace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Concelebrating with Archimandrite Vassian were Hegumen Nikon (Golovko), Mission secretary; sacristans of the Mission's metochions – Archpriest Miroslav Vitiv of the Church of Prophet Elijah in Haifa, Archpriest Nikolai Zhdanov of the Church of St. Tabitha in Jaffa and Hieromonk Amvrosy (Ignatov) of the Church of the Holy Forefathers in Hebron. Among the concelebrants were also Hieromonk Innokenty (Bespalov) and Priest Viktor Klinshov, clerics of the Gorny Convent in Ein Karem; Deacon Makary Petukhov, a cleric of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission; and Archpriest Spyridon

Samur, a cleric of the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem, Press Service of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission **reports**.

Praying at the Divine Liturgy were Metropolitan Benedict of Diocaesarea of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, Patriarchal Representative in Bethlehem; Archimandrite Polycarp, sacristan of the Church of the Holy Nativity; Mother Superior Yekaterina (Chernyshova) and sisters of the Gorny Convent in Eim Karem; volunteer workers from the Mission's metochions in the Holy Land and Russian-speaking pilgrims.

Mr A.V. Sakharov, Counsellor for Economic Affairs of the Russian Embassy in Israel, and Mr Yury Romashuk, representative of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to the Palestinian National Authority, also attended the Divine service.

The Liturgy was celebrated in Church Slavonic, Greek and Arabic. Liturgical hymns were performed by the Gorny Convent choir.

After the Liturgy Archimandrite Vassian, the clergy of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission and sisters of the Gorny Convent wished Metropolitan Benedict blessed Christmas and presented him with a memorable gift.

The Mission clergy and nuns also visited the Lavra of the Venerable Sabbas the Sanctified and the Greek monastery in the Shepherds' Field where on the night of the Nativity the angels had been singing, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Lk 2:14).