Representatives of Local Orthodox Churches participated in a divine service at the American Metochion in Moscow



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On the 27th of February, the feast day of St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn, a solemn Divine service was celebrated at St. Catherine's Church on Vspolye, the Moscow Representation of the Orthodox Church in America.

The Divine Liturgy was led by Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'. He was joined by: Archpriest Daniel Andreiuk, representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Moscow Patriarchal See, rector of the Church of the Holy Great Martyr Catherine; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, rector of the Church of the Renewal of the Temple in Danilovskaya Sloboda; Archpriest Andrei Tkachev, rector of the Church of the Life-Giving Trinity in Khokhly; Priest Timothy Chaikin, rector of the Patriarchal Representation of St Nicholas Church in Zayaitsky, Moscow, clergyman of the All-Russian Cossack Society and the First

Cossack University; Priest Afanasy Ogeruk, clergyman of the Church of St. Catherine the Great Martyr in Vspolye; Hierodeacon Arseny (Pisarev), clergyman of the Moscow Representation of the Antiochian Orthodox Church; Deacon Konstantin Gerasimovich; Deacon Alexander Mikhailov; [other] invited clergy.

After the intercessory prayer, grorifying prayers to St Raphael of Brooklyn were sung: the troparion, kontakion and magnification were sung before his icon in the kiot in the refectory church, reports **the** website of the Representation.

In his words after the dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Niphon expressed his sincere gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and the rector, Archpriest Daniel Andriyuk, for the opportunity to glorify Saint Raphael of Brooklyn on the day of his memory and for the joy of the service. He congratulated the clergy and parishioners of the church on the feast and addressed them with an archpastoral word. In his sermon, Vladyka Niphon emphasised that St Raphael is an example to follow because of his courage and love for Christ and people.

Archpriest Daniel Andriyuk brought words of filial gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' for his attention, care and concern for the Church of St. Catherine the Great Martyr in Vspolye, the Representation of the Orthodox Church in America, and expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Metropolitan Niphon for serving the Liturgy on that festive day.

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St Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn (born Rafla Hawawini), was born in 1860 in Beirut into a devout Christian family. His parents came fr om Damascus and fled from Syria to Lebanon because of the civil war. After one year, the family returned to Damascus. In 1874 Rafla graduated brilliantly from primary school, in 1879 he finished pastoral preparatory courses at the Patriarchate of Antioch and accepted monasticism with the name Raphael. He was then sent by the Patriarch of Antioch to the Theological School on the island of Halki, wh ere he was ordained a deacon in 1885. In 1886, Father Raphael returned to Damascus and became a preacher for the See of Antioch.

Two years later he entered the Kiev Theological Seminary, and in 1889 he was appointed head of the Antiochian See in Moscow. The same year Father Raphael was ordained a hieromonk in Kiev in the Church of the Brethren Monastery and elevated to the rank of archimandrite in Moscow at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour. After graduating from the Kiev Theological Academy, Archimandrite Raphael was sent to the Kazan Theological Academy to teach Arabic.

In 1895, Archimandrite Raphael came to the United States and was assigned to New York to minister

to the Syro-Arab Orthodox Christians. In 1901, he was twice elected Metropolitan in absentia to the chairs of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, but declined, wishing to serve the cause of spreading Orthodoxy in America.

In 1904, Archimandrite Raphael was ordained Bishop of Brooklyn, Vicar of the Aleutian Diocese, in the Cathedral of St Nicholas in New York by St Tikhon (Bellavin), the future Patriarch of All Rus'. That was the first Orthodox consecration in America. The priestly vestments were donated by the holy Passionbearer Emperor Nicholas II.

In July 1905, Saint Raphael consecrated the area set aside for the Monastery of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk (South Canaan, Pennsylvania) and blessed the orphanage there.

The ministry of St Raphael of Brooklyn in America lasted twenty years. He ministered to his flock, taught and preached, including through the Slovo magazine which he started for Orthodox Arabs. The Saint's missionary work included translations of liturgical texts and the creation of prayer books for Arabic-speaking believers; he also wrote several books. Thanks to his labours, the Syro-Arab Mission had 30 parishes with 25,000 believers.

St Raphael said of himself: "I am an Arab by origin, a Greek by education, an American by place of residence, a Russian by heart and a Slav by soul".

Saint Raphael of Brooklyn fell asleep in the Lord in 1915. He was canonised by the Orthodox Church in America in 2000 and glorified at the Monastery of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk in South Canaan.

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