



## **DECR chairman visits cathedral church in Sremski Karlovci**



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In the evening of March 4, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), currently on a working visit to Serbia, arrived in the city of Novi Sad, where he met with Bishops Irinej of Bačka, Isihije of Valejevo and Damaskin of Mohacs.

On March 5, Metropolitan Anthony visited the city of Sremski Karlovci. The hierarch of the Russian Church was greeted by Bishop Vasilije of Srem at the Cathedral of St. Nicholas. Among those gathered

there were archpriest Jovan Milanović, rector of the seminary, and clergy of the diocese of Srem.

Bishop Vasilije addressed the DECR chairman, saying: “You will have the opportunity to visit some monasteries on Fruška Gora and venerate the holy relics kept in these abodes. You will always be a very dear guest in our diocese.” He told the guests about the history of monasticism on Fruška Gora, noting that once there were almost forty monasteries there, and mentioned Russian bishops and monastics, including Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), who have left a mark in the spiritual history of the region.

“I am delighted to welcome you here and receive the blessing you have brought to us from the saints of Holy Rus’ who are praying to God for the salvation of the Russian, Ukrainian, and other peoples, and for all those suffering in this difficult time full of temptations, wherever they live, be it Palestine, Israel, Kosovo and Metohija, or other places,” the bishop continued to say. “It is so good that today we could pray to the Lord together, beseeching him to end all wars in this world and grant peace and the grace of the Holy Spirit to all God’s people.”

Metropolitan Anthony thanked Bishop heartily for brotherly love and hospitality and said: “We, pilgrims from the Russian Church, have arrived in Serbia with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’ to meet with His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia and make a pilgrimage to the holy places of your country.”

The archpastor added that his heart fluttered at arriving in Sremski Karlovci, a city inseparably associated with a tragic chapter in history of the Russian Church. “We will never forget that bishops, priests, monks and laypersons of the Russian Orthodox Church, who were forced to leave their Motherland, had found shelter and brotherly love of their Serbian brothers here. This chapter is one of many in history that tell us about the indissoluble ties between the Serbian and Russian Churches and between our nations united by common history, but most of all by the one Orthodox faith,” he said.

Metropolitan Anthony underscored that it was a great honor for him to meet Bishop Vasilije of Srem, one of the best-known hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and asked him and all the worshippers to pray for the unity of the Church. “This unity is withstanding all the upheavals, and our hearts ache for our brothers in Ukraine who are experiencing hardships and sufferings, while the canonical Church is going through challenges of real harassment and persecution,” the archpastor said.

He expressed the hope that today’s meeting would serve to further strengthening of good fraternal relations between the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches and between the two peoples.

Also, the DECR chairman conveyed to Bishop Vasilije cordial wishes of good health and God's aid in his archpastoral labours from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'.

The delegation accompanying Metropolitan Anthony on the trip consists of archpriest Nikolai Balashov, counselor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', and deacon Nikolai Vasin, secretary of the DECR chairman. The guests are also accompanied by the hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Bishop Isihije of Valejevo and Bishop Damaskin of Mohacs.

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