



## Metropolitan Anthony on a pilgrimage to Serbian monasteries on Fruška Gora



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On March 5, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), and members of his delegation, currently on a visit to the diocese of Srem of the Serbian Orthodox Church, made a pilgrimage to a number of old monasteries located on the slopes of the Fruška Gora mountain. In the old days, there were almost forty monasteries here so the place is known for its traditions of monastic life.

On the trip, Metropolitan Anthony is accompanied by archpriest Nikolai Balashov, counselor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', and deacon Nikolai Vasin, secretary of the DECR chairman. Also participating in the pilgrimage are the hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Bishop Isihije of

Valejevo and Bishop Damaskin of Mohacs.

The pilgrims visited the Grgeteg convent of St. Nicholas on the southern slope of Fruška Gora. According to legend, it was founded by the despot (ruler) Vuk Grgurević in memory of his father Gregorios (Grgur) in 1471. Metropolitan Anthony was greeted by the nun Nina in the church dedicated to the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas, Archbishop of Myra. She gave the guests a tour of the convent and noted that having lived here were Russians who left their country after revolutionary events of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There is the grave of a monk from Valaam in the cemetery here. The pilgrims also visited the chapel of St. Seraphim of Sarov.

The next place of pilgrimage was the Jazak convent. It was founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and dedicated to the Entry of the Most Holy Virgin Mary into the Temple. The great number of pilgrims who used to come here brought about the construction of a newer and bigger abode making it the 'youngest' on Fruška Gora. The 'old' Jazak was destroyed over time, and only ruins remain nowadays. The 'new' Jazak is dedicated to the Holy Trinity. The relics of the holy king Uroš (†1347), the last ruler of the Nemanjić dynasty, are lying in rest here. The miraculous Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, a shrine of the Russian diaspora, was kept in the convent in 1920-1927.

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk and other participants in the pilgrimage venerated the holy relics of St. Uroš. The honoured guests were greeted by abbess Paraskeva, who wished that the prayer of this saint at the Throne of the Heavenly King would strengthen them all in their labours and trials of life.

Bishop Anthony thanked the abbess and the nuns for their warm hospitality and said: "We arrived from Russia to Serbia for several days to meet with His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije and bishops of the Serbian Church. We are very happy to have the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to the shrines of the Serbian Orthodox Church, to its monasteries and convents. It is the first opportunity for me. My homeland is located many hundreds of kilometers from here, but I feel at home with you thanks, of course, to your kind hearts, but first of all because we are united by one Orthodox faith and our Churches and our peoples have historically good relationship. We experience common joys and sorrows."

The DECR chairman asked the sisters to "pray for Russia and the Russian Church" and added: "We always pray for Serbia and for its fraternal people. We beseech the Lord to bless all of us with peace and prosperity."

At the Novo Hopovo monastery, Metropolitan Anthony and his suite visited the church famous for its old frescoes, and venerated the relics of the Holy Great Martyr Theodore Tyron. Greeting the high guest was the abbot, archimandrite Pavle.

The history of the monastery dates back to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A century later, it became the most important educational center for the Serbs with a seminary. The inhabitants of the monastery maintained close ties with Russia and the Holy Mount Athos. In 1920, the Novo Khopovo monastery became a convent. Russian nuns who came to Serbia after the Revolution and Civil War found shelter here. The monastery was given to the Russian sisterhood from the Lesna convent. Countess Yevgeniya Yevfimovskaya, who was close to the Russian Royal Family and was acquainted with St. John of Kronstadt, became abbess of the convent with the name of Yekaterina. The abode became a monastery in 2005.

The pilgrimage participants honoured memory of abbess Yekaterina and said a prayer at her grave.

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