



Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission participates in the Patriarchal service in Lod



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On November 16, the feast of the Renewal of the Church of St. George the Victorious in Lydda, archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, took part in the festive service in the city of Lod, historically known as Lydda, where the tomb of the great martyr is located.

Officiating at the Divine service was His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine, Primate of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem. He was assisted by Archbishops Damaskinos of Joppa and Aristarchos of Constantina, archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), deacon Makary Petukhov of the Mission, and the Arabic-speaking clergymen of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

H.E. Anatoly Viktorov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the State of Israel, attended the service as a guest of honour.

Praying at the Divine Liturgy were Archbishop Aristovoulus of Madaba, Patriarchate of Jerusalem, members of the Orthodox Greek and Arab communities in the Holy Land, and numerous pilgrims. The service was celebrated in Greek, Arabic and Church Slavonic, the Mission's website reports.

After the service, the Council of Orthodox community of the city gave a gala reception, at which Ambassador Viktorov made a speech, recalling the historical role and patronage actions of the Russian state in the Middle East.

Lod, as Lydda is called nowadays, is a city in Israel 15 km southeast of Tel Aviv. It first appears in 1465 B.C. and is mentioned a few times in the New Testament. Its main attraction is the tomb of St. George the Victorious. The city is also famous for its mosaics, which date back to the early 3rd century and are among the largest (180 m²) in the country, of exceptional quality and in an excellent state of preservation.

In 1871, Patriarch Cyril II of Jerusalem asked the Russian holders of the Order of St. George to make a donation for the restoration of the church of the Great Martyr. By order of Emperor Alexander II, the Chapter of Russian Imperial and Tsarist Orders donated 3,000 roubles. A new church was built on the money received from the Chapter and from the Russian government. The church was consecrated on November 3, 1872. In memory of this event, the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of the Renewal of the church of St. George in Lydda on November 3/16.

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