Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk visits Metropolitanate of Banja Luka



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On November 18, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), continued his working visit to the Serbian Orthodox Church by visiting Republika Srpska. In the city of Banja Luka, Metropolitan Anthony and the delegation accompanying him, which consists of archpriest Nikolai Balashov, advisor to His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR deputy chairman, and Rev. Nikolai Vasin, secretary of the DECR chairman, visited the Church of the Holy Trinity and venerated the relics of hieromartyr Platon, Bishop of Banja Luka.

The guests fr om the Russian Orthodox Church proceeded to the diocesan center of the Metropolitanate of Banja Luka, wh ere they were received by Archbishop and Metropolitan Jefrem of Banja Luka.

Attending the meeting were also Bishop Sava of Marca, vicar of the Diocese of Banja Luka, Bishop Stephen of Remisiana, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', and Mr. Marko Romić, adviser to the president of Republika Srpska on religious issues.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', Metropolitan Anthony presented Metropolitan Jefrem with the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh, 2nd class, an award of the Russian Orthodox Church. In his congratulatory speech, Metropolitan Anthony emphasized that the Russian Orthodox Church highly esteems Metropolitan Jefrem as a longtime good friend who has exerted many efforts for bringing the two Churches closer together and for consolidating Orthodox unity. The DECR chairman wished Metropolitan Jefrem good health and God's aid in his archpastoral ministry.

Metropolitan Jefrem expressed deep gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the high award and attention and said that the Russian Orthodox Church and its Primate are carrying out a great mission by standing strong for Holy Orthodoxy. Also, the Serbian hierarch shared reminiscence fr om his time as a student at the Moscow Theological Academy. Every morning he prayed at the relics of St. Sergius of Radonezh, and therefore the award by the Order of the great saint is a special honour for him and a sign of God's blessing.

The long hearty talk followed, during which Metropolitan Jefrem told the guests about church life in his diocese. The hierarchs exchanged opinions on the state of affairs in world Orthodoxy and on the persecution that the canonical Church in Ukraine is suffering. At the end of the meeting, participants exchanged gifts.

After the talk, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk and his suite visited the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and then proceeded to the Palace of the Republic, wh ere they met with President Milorad Dodik of Republika Srpska.

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