



## **DECR chairman visits Archdioceses of Zahlé and Beirut of Antiochian Patriarchate**



**DECR Communication Service, 18/05/2025**

On 17<sup>th</sup> May 2025, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, who had arrived in Lebanon to take part in the consecration of the Church of the “Unexpected Joy” Icon of the Mother of God in Zahlé, visited the Archdiocese of Zahlé. In the diocesan residence, he had a brotherly meeting with Metropolitan Antonios of Zahlé and Baalbek, and a native of Zahlé – Metropolitan Nifon of Philippopolis, Representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’. Thanks to the efforts of Metropolitan Nifon, a church in the Russian architectural style was built in his home city.

A solemn assembly in honour of Metropolitan Nifon took place in the diocesan residence. Among the speakers were Metropolitan Antonios of Zahlé and Baalbek and the Mayor of Zahlé, Mr Assad Zughaib. Metropolitan Nifon of Philippopolis also addressed all those present, expressing his joy at the fact that his dream to build a Russian church in his home city had come true and that a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church was there to take part in the celebrations.

After that, during an official ceremony, one of the streets in Zahlé was named after Metropolitan Nifon of Philippopolis. Among those who attended the ceremony were Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk; Metropolitan Feodor of Volgograd and Kamyshin; Metropolitan Alexy of Chelyabinsk and Miass; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, Adviser to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR Deputy Chairman; Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), Rector of the Moscow Metochion of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia; Priest Nikolai Vasin, Secretary to the DECR Chairman; Mr Yegor Skopenko, Executive Director of the Foundation for Support of Christian Culture and Heritage, with his spouse; as well as representatives of the local authorities and clerics of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and the Russian Church.

That same day later, the guests visited the Archdiocese of Beirut and met with Metropolitan Elias of Beirut. Taking part in the meeting were Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk; Metropolitan Nifon of Philippopolis; Metropolitan Feodor of Volgograd and Kamyshin; Metropolitan Alexy of Chelyabinsk and Miass; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk; Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), Representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk, Representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; as well as Mr Alexander Rudakov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Lebanon.

Metropolitan Elias said he welcomed the opportunity to meet with the guests from Russia on the eve of a wonderful event – the consecration of the church in Zahlé built in the Russian architectural style. He shared his reminiscences of the time he had got acquainted with the Russian religious tradition during his studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary, when he had been studying under professors Archpriests John Meyendorff and Alexander Schmemmann, and other representatives of the Russian theological school. The participants in the meeting, held in an atmosphere of warm cordiality, also discussed various topics of inter-church cooperation and the situation of Christians in the Middle East region, along with other issues.