



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America visits Panama



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The archpastoral visit of Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America to the Republic of Panama began on August 22.

On the first day of his visit, Bishop Leonid met with His Excellency José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta, the Catholic Archbishop of Panama, at the Cathedral Basilica of Santa Maria la Antigua in the capital of the country. Among those attending the meeting were Mr. Yevgeny Neshumov, Minister-Counsellor of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Panama; hieromonk Anthony (Zhukov), rector of the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos in Panama; and Mr. Artemy Nosach, the third secretary of the Embassy. The talk was followed by a short tour of the cathedral, the Diocese's Telegram channel reports.

On the same day, Bishop Leonid met with Minister-Counsellor Neshumov. They discussed issues related to cooperation between the Diocese of Argentina and the diplomatic mission of Russia in Panama, as well as other issues of mutual interest. Taking part in the meeting were also hieromonk Anthony (Zhukov) and Mr. Nosach.

On August 23, Bishop Leonid visited the private school named after the Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon for children who need particular attention of teachers. The school is located in the town of Chame, Panama West Province. On September 1, it will open its doors to forty children with special needs.

Meeting the honored guest were the headmistress Anna Percy, and some children and their parents. Bishop Leonid and hieromonk Anthony (Zhukov) celebrated glorification of the heavenly patron of the school – the Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon. Bishop Leonid wished all those present God's blessing and aid in good deeds. Also, he expressed the wish that along with attention to physical features of the children, the teachers would give due care to their spiritual development. In memory of the meeting, the archpastor presented the school with an icon of the Guardian Angel.

Later that day, Bishop Leonid celebrated a prayer service and a funeral litiya at the Ss Vladimir and Olga Equal-to-the-Apostles chapel-tomb in El Valle de Antón, a picturesque town in the Coclé Province located in the crater of an extinct volcano. The chapel is built on the burial place of Russian emigrants, archpriest Vladimir Ulyantsev and Ms. Olga Kolchitskaya, a woman of noble birth. Descending from this noble stem were many prominent public officials and the famous Siberian missionary, St. Innocent of Irkutsk. In 1998, the then chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', visited the chapel.

After the services, Bishop Leonid talked with archpriest Vladimir and Olga's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who told the archpastor about the history of their family.

In the evening, on the eve of the 11th Sunday after Pentecost, Bishop Leonid celebrated the All-Night Vigil at the Church of the Intercession of the Most Holy Theotokos in Panama City.

On Sunday, August 24, the hierarch celebrated the Divine Liturgy. He was assisted by the rector of the church, hieromonk Anthony (Zhukov); hieromonk Anthony (Montero) of the Diocese of Mexico of the Orthodox Church in America; and protodeacon Sergy Kulikov, a cleric of the home church at the archbishop's house in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

After the Litany of Fervent Supplication, Bishop Leonid offered a prayer for Holy Rus'.

Among those praying at the service were Minister-Counselor Yevgeny Neshumov, employees of the diplomatic mission, compatriots, local residents and guests of the capital city.

After the dismissal and glorification of the Transfiguration of the Lord, the afterfeast of which is being celebrated these days, Bishop Leonid addressed the congregation with an archpastoral homily and thanked all those present for common prayer. Talking about the Gospel passage read at the Liturgy, the hierarch reminded the worshippers that we are all debtors before the Lord: our Heavenly Father forgives us and has mercy on us. Therefore, we should not be arrogant to our neighbors, but should be humble and forgive them, thus escaping God's severe punishment for the lack of mercy (cf. Mt. 18:23-35).

Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America presented episcopal certificates to the rector of the church, hieromonk Anthony (Zhukov), and Ms. Yekaterina Prokhorets, head of the parish school of icon-painting, in appreciation of many years of their labours for the glory of God. Mr. Thomas Fabrega, the treasurer of the parish, was presented with a letter of thanks.

In memory of common prayer, Bishop Leonid gave icons of St. Martin the Merciful, Bishop of Tours, the patron saint of Buenos Aires, to all those present.

The archpastor's communication with parishioners continued during a festive meal.