



Clergy of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission celebrate Liturgy at the Grotto of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem



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According to a long-standing tradition, the clergy of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, who serve in the Holy Land, gather in Bethlehem, in advance of the feast of the Nativity of Christ to celebrate the annual 'Russian' Divine Liturgy at the Grotto of the Nativity,

On January 2, the forefeast of the Nativity of Christ and the commemoration day of St. John of Kronstadt, officiating at the Divine Liturgy with the blessing of His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem was Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, the Mission's website reports.

Concelebrating with him at the site of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ in Bethlehem were the

sacristans of the Mission's metochions: archpriest Miroslav Vitiv of St. Elijah metochion in Haifa; archpriest Nikolai Zhdanov of St. Tabitha metochion in Jaffa; hieromonk Amvrosy (Ignatov) of the Holy Forefathers metochion in Hebron; hieromonk Innokenty (Bespalov), a cleric of the Gorny Convent in Ein Karem; priest Sergy Demidov, a cleric of the Diocese of Moscow; hieromonk Peter (Borodulin) and deacon Makary Petukhov, clerics of the Mission; and archpriest Spyridon Sammur, a cleric of the Church of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Among those praying at the divine service were Metropolitan Benedictos of Diocaesarea, Patriarchal representative in Bethlehem; clerics of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem; hegumeness Yekaterina (Chernysheva) of the Gorny Convent in Ein Karem, with the sisters; representatives of the local Greek Orthodox and Arab Orthodox communities; and a large number of Russian-speaking pilgrims.

The divine service at the Holy Grotto was celebrated in Church Slavonic, Greek, and Arabic. The hymns of the Divine Liturgy were sung by the choir of the sisters of the Gorny Convent.

After the service, the clergy of the Mission and of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the sisters of the Gorny Convent, and the pilgrims were received by Metropolitan Benedictos at the refectory chambers of the Church of the Nativity. Archimandrite Vassian congratulated Metropolitan Benedictos on the coming feast and presented him with a Christmas gift. The sisters sang Christmas carols and hymns.