



Representative of Russian Church Attends Patronal Celebrations at Church of “Unexpected Joy” Icon of the Mother of God in Zahlé, Lebanon



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On 14th May 2026, at the invitation of Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, Representative of the Orthodox Church of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), Representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, took part in celebrations marking the patronal feast of the Church of the “Unexpected Joy” Icon of the Mother of God in Zahlé, Lebanon.

Officiating at the Divine Liturgy on the feast day were Metropolitan Antonios of Zahlé and Baalbek, Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis and Metropolitan Silouan of Mount Lebanon. Archimandrite Philip

and the clergy of the Archdiocese of Zahlé and Baalbek concelebrated with the hierarchs.

The liturgical languages were Arabic and Church Slavonic, website of the Russian Orthodox Church's Metochion in Lebanon **reports**.

Among those who attended the divine service were Mr Alexander Rudakov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Lebanese Republic; Mr Kamal Abou Jaoudeh, Governor of Beqaa; Ms Myriam Skaff, Leader of the Popular Bloc Party; as well as members of the Lebanese Parliament, ministers, ambassadors, senior statespersons, the Lebanese army and security services officials.

After the dismissal, Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis greeted the archpastors, clergymen and worshippers, saying in particular:

“Your Eminences the archpastors, all-honourable fathers, dear brothers and sisters, I have come to you on this occasion from Moscow, bringing with me the faith of millions of Christ's followers in the Russian land who together with us today are celebrating the commemoration day of the ‘Unexpected Joy’ Icon of the Most Holy Theotokos.

“And here we are together with you, asking for her intercession and receiving from her joy that fills every one of us, so that love and peace may find their incarnation in the world and especially in our beloved country and our dear Zahlé – the city protected by the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

“Today our Most Holy Lady Theotokos has granted great joy to His Eminence Metropolitan Antonios of Zahlé and me, for we have been vouchsafed to celebrate her feast day and establish the 14th of May as the annual commemoration day of the ‘Unexpected Joy’ Icon of the Theotokos, with the month of May in Lebanon being dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

“Another source of our great joy is that all of you are taking part in today's celebrations.”

The hierarch thanked the archpastors and pastors, representatives of the Lebanese authorities, diplomats and all those present for attending the church celebrations on the feast day.

After the Liturgy, the guests, accompanied by Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, visited a memorial museum at the Church of the “Unexpected Joy” Icon of the Mother of God and shared a festive repast.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/94288/>