Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk attends festal Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos in Beirut



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On 1 November 2026, as part of the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church Metochion in Lebanon, a festal Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Metochion's Church of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Theotokos in Jal el Dib.

The service was celebrated by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, together with hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Antioch: Metropolitan Silouan of Mount Lebanon, Metropolitan Anthony of Zahle and Baalbek, and Metropolitan Niphon of

Philippopolis, Representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'. Concelebrating with the hierarchs were Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, Advisor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, Deputy Chairman of the DECR; Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), Representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' to the Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East; Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), Rector of the Metochion of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in Moscow; Priest Nikolai Vasin, Secretary to the DECR Chairman; and clergy of the Antiochian Orthodox Church.

Prior to the Liturgy, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk performed the rite of consecration of the church's new iconostasis.

The service was celebrated in Arabic, Church Slavonic and Slovak. The Moscow Synodal Choir and the men's choir of the Metropolis of Mount Lebanon sang during the Divine Liturgy.

Among the distinguished guests were A.N. Rudakov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Lebanese Republic; M. Menassa, Minister of Defence of Lebanon; M. Trojanović, Ambassador of Serbia to Lebanon; V. Franco, Ambassador of Slovakia to Lebanon; M.A. El-Murr, Head of the Municipality of Zalka; S.V. Stepashin, Chairman of the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society; J. Sarraf, Honorary Consul of Russia in Lebanon; M. Nasreddine, President of the Lebanese-Russian Cooperation Society ROSLIVAN; and R. Abiad, Head of the Orthodox Council of Lebanon.

At the conclusion of the service, Metropolitan Silouan of Mount Lebanon read out a message of greetings fr om His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East, marking the 80th anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church Metochion in Lebanon.

"For eighty years, this Metochion has been a house of prayer, wh ere prayers have been offered in Church Slavonic, and a spiritual refuge for the children of the Moscow Patriarchate from various countries who have found a second homeland in Lebanon. The Metochion owes much of its existence and uninterrupted ministry to the tireless labours of the devout fathers who, over the years, have represented the Russian Orthodox Church at the Patriarchal See of Antioch. We gratefully remember their service and their unceasing care for the Metochion," the message stated.

Expressing his conviction that "the bonds of faith that unite Antioch and Moscow cannot be broken by any trials of history", the Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Church called for these bonds to be strengthened through mutual prayer and joint service to those in need.

His Beatitude Patriarch John expressed his heartfelt gratitude to His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', and to all the members of the Russian Orthodox Church delegation who had

travelled to Lebanon to share in the joy of this significant anniversary.

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk conveyed to those gathered the congratulations of His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', on the anniversary of the establishment of the Metochion. The hierarch thanked the Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Church for his love, care and particular pastoral attention to the Russian-speaking Orthodox community in Lebanon.

"Over these eight decades, the lives of both the Russian and Antiochian Churches have been marked by various events, both joyful and sorrowful. Yet throughout all these years, the Metochion has continued to fulfil its two principal purposes: it has represented the Russian Orthodox Church at the ancient Patriarchal See of Antioch, serving as a bridge connecting the two Patriarchates, and it has been, and remains, a place of prayer for Russian-speaking faithful residing in Lebanon," the DECR Chairman noted.

As a token of prayerful remembrance, Metropolitan Anthony presented the Metochion with an altar cross, and its Rector, Archimandrite Philip, with a pectoral cross adorned with decorations. He also presented the priest with a Patriarchal certificate of appreciation.

Patriarchal awards were also presented to benefactors and members of the Metochion's community. A.N. Rudakov, Ambassador of Russia to Lebanon, received the Order of St Seraphim of Sarov, Third Class. D.A. Zelenin, Honorary Warden of the Metochion and Head of the Middle East Department of TASS, was awarded the Order of St Daniel of Moscow, Third Class.

Patriarchal certificates of appreciation were presented to Yu.A. Massoud, Assistant Treasurer of the Metochion; A.A. Haddad, Secretary of the Metochion; and M. Nasreddine, President of the Lebanese-Russian Cooperation Society ROSLIVAN.

The festive programme continued with a performance by pupils of the parish Sunday school. The Moscow Synodal Choir then gave a short concert for the guests and parishioners.

As a memento of the celebrations, Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), Rector of the Metochion, presented Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk with an epitrachelion and an omophorion. Metropolitan Silouan of Mount Lebanon received a copy of the Riham Icon of the Mother of God and a seven-branched candlestick; Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis was presented with an icon of the Mother of God "Unexpected Joy"; Metropolitan Anthony of Zahle and Baalbek received an icon of the Apostle Thomas; and M. Menassa, Minister of Defence of Lebanon, was presented with an icon of St Philip, Metropolitan of Moscow. Commemorative gifts were also presented to the church's benefactors and members of the Moscow Patriarchate delegation.

A festive luncheon was subsequently hosted on behalf of Metropolitan Silouan of Mount Lebanon.

On the same day, at the invitation of Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, the Moscow Synodal Choir gave a concert in the city of Zahle.

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