



## **Delegation of Russian Orthodox Church takes part in the enthronement of Bulgarian Patriarch**

On 24 February 2013, the Patriarchal Electoral Church and People's Council which took place in Sofia elected Metropolitan Neophyte of Ruse as Metropolitan of Sofia and Patriarch of Bulgaria.

Accompanied by members of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the new Primate led a litiya procession, with bells pealing solemnly, from the Synodal Chamber, where the Electoral Council met, to the Patriarchal Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky. Waiting for His Holiness at the church were representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches who had arrived in Sofia at the invitation of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church was represented at the enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; and archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations. Among those present in the church was also archimandrite Filipp (Vasiltsev), rector of the metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Sofia.

Bishop Naum of Stobi, general secretary of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, read out an Election Act. Symbols of patriarchal dignity were presented to Metropolitan Neophyte, and the rite of enthronement was performed.

Metropolitan Joannikij of Sliven greeted His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.

Bulgarian President Mr. Rosen Plevneliev congratulated His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte on the enthronement.

That same day, His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria gave a banquet at the Sheraton Sofia Hotel Balkan. The newly elected Primate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church accepted greetings from Primates and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches. Metropolitan Hilarion read out a message of greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and presented a Russian-made patriarchal staff to His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte.

In the evening, members of the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation attended a reception in honour of the new Primate of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, which took place in the crypt of the St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Sofia, and had a talk with His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte.

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