



## **For the first time the Sash of the Our Most Holy Lady is brought to Russia from Mount Athos**

The Sash of our Most Holy Lady was brought to Russia from the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos on October 20, 2011. The shrine has been brought by the St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

It is for the first time that the shrine, which is kept in the Monastery of Vatopedi, has left Greece. As Archimandrite Ephrem, the abbot of the monastery, told earlier to journalists, the reliquary with the Sash is normally brought to a particular Greek city once a year at a request of the faithful. According to Father Ephrem as cited by 'Interfax-Religion', requests to bring the Sash had come from other countries including the USA and Romania, but the monastery denied them. It made an exception for Russia, in which the Precious Sash will stay from October 20 to November 23, 2011.

The Russian Government's website reports that the shrine was met at the Pulkovo airport in St. Petersburg by Prime Minister V. Putin, Deputy Prime Minister D. Kozak, St. Petersburg Mayor G. Poltavchenko and other officials. They venerated the shrine. The clergy of the St. Petersburg diocese celebrated a thanksgiving at the airport.

Mr. Yakunin, chairman of the St. Andrew Foundation and president of the Russian Railways company, presented Mr. Putin with an icon painted in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos on the occasion of the bringing of the Precious Sash to Russia.

The shrine was taken from the airport to the church of Our Lady of Kazan at the Novodevichy Convent in St. Petersburg. Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga said a thanksgiving at it together with the city's clergy.

The shrine will stay in the church till October 24 with access for the faithful from 06.00 to 22.00. During its stay in the church, prayer services will be held continually, the official website of the Moscow Patriarchate has reported.

*DECR Communication Service*