



Archbishop Hilarion visits Russian embassy in Beijing

Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, who is in Beijing on the invitation of the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs, visited on 16 November 2009 the Embassy of the Russian Federation. Archbishop Hilarion and other members of the official delegation of the Presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations and the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations were welcomed by Russian Ambassador in Beijing S. Razov, minister-counsellor E. Tomikhin and other Russian diplomats in China.

Archbishop Hilarion and his delegation together with the welcoming party proceeded to the restored Church of the Holy Dormition. Since 1901 this church was part of the ensemble of churches in the Russian Orthodox Mission in China, whose territory is now used by the embassy. After the Mission was closed in 1954, the church was turned into a garage. Thanks to the joint efforts of the DECR and the Russian Foreign Ministry and with the active personal support of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, the church was restored and consecrated on 13 October 2009.

Ambassador S. Razov showed the DECR chairman a museum accommodated in the facilities adjacent to the church and devoted history and heritage of the Russian Orthodox Mission in China. Archbishop Hilarion gave his book *The Mystery of Faith* to the church library.

Then His Eminence saw the Red Fanza, which used to be the Chapel of St. Innocent in which Russian Orthodox priest celebrated in the last years.

After that the delegation proceeded to the reverence cross erected in 1997 in the embassy's territory to commemorate those who worked in that place. Then Archbishop Hilarion saw the memorial built on the place where the Church of All Saints used to be. Buried in its crypt are 222 Chinese martyrs, members of the Imperial Family who were executed in Alapayevsk and heads and members of the Russian Mission in China. The church was blown up in 1956 when the embassy compound was built. The fate of relics and remains buried in the crypt needs a further study.

Introducing Archbishop Hilarion to the history of the Russian Orthodox presence in China, Ambassador S. Razov stressed that through the efforts and prayers of Russian clergy, scholars and diplomats that part of Beijing 'became truly a holy place'.

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