



A representative of the Moscow Patriarchate took part in the celebrations marking the 120th anniversary of the consecration of the Russian church on Shipka



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On 23-25 September 2022 the 120th anniversary of the consecration of the Russian church on Shipka was celebrated in Bulgaria. The Memorial Church was built in 1902 to mark the 25th anniversary of the victory in the War of Independence. Church of the Nativity on Shipka is a symbol of the glorious victory and heroic deeds of the brotherly Slavic peoples, who gave their lives for freedom from the Ottoman yoke. In the crypt of the church rest the remains of thousands of Russian soldiers and Bulgarian militia symbolizing Christian sacrificial love.

The celebrations marking the 120th anniversary of the consecration of the Russian Church of the Nativity of Christ on Shipka were opened by a scientific conference held at the Historical Museum "Iskra" in Kazanlak. The conference was attended by Russian scientists, who came to Bulgaria through the Russian Historical Society. On the same day in the evening in Sofia, the Russian Cultural and Information Center hosted a concert by the Moscow Synodal Choir, which performed church hymns by famous Russian and Bulgarian church composers.

On September 24 the service at the Church of the Nativity of Christ on Shipka was attended by clergy and guests from various cities of Bulgaria. The Service of Great Vespers was presided over by Bishop Polikarp of Belogradchishki, accompanied by the Representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' to the Patriarch of Bulgaria, Father Superior of the Patriarchal Metochion in Sofia Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeev), monastic brotherhood and clergy of the Old Zagora Metropolis.

After the evening service, celebrations of the 120th anniversary of the consecration of the Church on Shipka continued at the Historical Museum "Spark" in Kazanlak. The bishops, clergy and guests were shown a film about the history of construction of the church on Shipka by journalist G. Mikova. After the film, the guests explored the exhibition dedicated to the history of the Church of the Nativity. There were photos and documents, telling about the history of the church.

Then a concert of spiritual music was held. The guests were treated to a performance by the Archdiocesan Choir of the Old Zagora Metropolis, conducted by Regent Maria Denkova, and the Moscow Synodal Choir, directed by Honored Artist of Russia Alexei Puzakov. The concert featured church hymns by famous Russian and Bulgarian composers.

On September 25, there was a celebratory Divine Liturgy dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the consecration of the Church of the Nativity of Christ on Shipka. The service was presided over by Metropolitan Kiprian of Starozagorsk, accompanied by Metropolitan Gabriel of Lovechansk, auxiliary Bishop Polikarp of Belogradchish, auxiliary Bishop Hierotheus of Agatopol, and auxiliary Bishop Michael of Constantia. The hierarchs served with Protosingel of the Metropolis of Stara Zagora, Archimandrite Bogoslov (Dimitrov), Representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Bulgaria, Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeev), and Protosingel of the Metropolis of Sofia, Archimandrite Vasiliy (Savov), a representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Nelutz Oprya, the abbot of the monastery on Shipka, Archimandrite Pankratii (Buzov), the rector of Sofia Cathedral of Holy Week, Archimandrite Nikolai Georgiev, Archimandrite Athanasii (Sultanov), the monastery brethren and numerous clergy of the Stara Zagora Metropolis.

E. V. Mitrofanova, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Bulgaria, former President of Bulgaria G. S. Pyrvanov, Galina Stoyanova, head of the Regional Administration of Kazanlak Community, and other guests prayed at the Liturgy.

At the conclusion of the Liturgy, Metropolitan Cyprian addressed the audience with a welcoming speech in which, among other things, he noted:

"This church was created by the sacrifice of thousands of soldiers of the Russian Imperial Army and the Bulgarian militia, the church was born by the warmth of their souls, weathered by the prayers of our Orthodox ancestors, who together with the flame of their household lamps maintained and ever-living fire of faith, so bright that it conveyed the national spirit and purity of our people's dreams during five centuries of Turkish slavery..."

Metropolitan Gavriel of Lovcany read a welcome address from His Holiness the Patriarch and the Synod of the Bulgarian Church. The message reads, in part:

"The ancestors erected the church in memory of the soldiers who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of our beloved Bulgaria... May God rest the souls of the soldiers who gave their lives for the faith and liberation of our dear Motherland, and those who worked on the construction and consecration of the majestic church! Eternal and blessed memory to them!"

Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeev), the representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the

Patriarch of Bulgaria, congratulated Metropolitan Kiprian and all those present on the holiday and read a greeting from Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

"I cordially congratulate you on the important and momentous date - the 120th anniversary of the consecration of the Church of the Nativity of Christ on Shipka. This majestic church, which is a common shrine of the Bulgarian and Russian Orthodox Churches, recalls the joint heroic struggle of the peoples they have been channelling for the liberation of Bulgaria from bitter foreign slavery, for the restoration of Bulgarian statehood, for the dignity of the cultural tradition trampled for five centuries and which goes back to the holy Equal Apostles Cyril and Methodius and their Godly disciples," the message says.

At the end of the celebrations, the bishops, clergy and laity gathered in front of the entrance to the church for a common photo, according to the website of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia in Sofia.

Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/89676/>