



Metropolitan Hilarion arrives in Athos

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On 9 October 2012, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, arrived in the Holy Mountain of Athos, leading a group of pilgrims. The pilgrims group also includes Archbishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad, chairman of the Synodal Department for Monasteries; Bishop Feofilakt of Dmitrov; Rev. Kirill Tatarka, secretary of the Hungarian diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church; DECR staff members hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), hierodeacon Ioann (Kopeikin) and Anatoly Churyakov; and several laymen from Russia and Great Britain.

In the beginning of their trip, the pilgrims visited the Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on the Holy Mountain of Athos. The brethren and the father confessor of the monastery, hieromonk Macarius, met Metropolitan Hilarion at the quay. The pilgrims venerated the shrines of the monastery, including the foot of St Andrew the First-Called Apostle and the holy relics of St Silouan the Athonite who lived and performed his monastic deeds at the monastery's mill. Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the brethren with words of greeting, saying in particular:

“Very Reverend Father, dear Brothers, I am very glad to step over the threshold of the Monastery of St Panteleimon, Great Martyr and Healer, once again. I come to this holy abode every time I visit Athos.

The Monastery of St Panteleimon has been keeping up ancient traditions established by Russian monks who lived on Mt. Athos. On every visit to this holy abode, I think about its history, about its shrines, and with reverence I venerate the holy relics of St Panteleimon the Great Martyr who heals our diseases and helps us in our lives.

Dear brothers, you perform special service here as you pray for the whole world, for the whole Church. And you pray particularly for our Russian Church which is reviving today and which performs her ministry in various countries and sometimes under difficult circumstances.

I would like to convey to you the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. He has been to this holy abode many times and in his heart he shares all its concerns, empathizes with all its sorrows. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill is concerned about the future of the monastery, as evidenced by the establishment of the Public Board of Trustees headed by His Holiness. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church is hoping to visit Mt. Athos and this holy monastery soon.

We ask you to pray for the Russian Church, for pilgrims who come here every day and, as always, we ask you to render your prayerful support and spiritual help to those who come to the monastery from all over the world. May God help you, dear brothers, in your monastic deeds and preserve you for many and good years.”

After a short repast, Metropolitan Hilarion had a conversation with the hegumen of the monastery, Archimandrite Jeremiah.

After that Metropolitan Hilarion, Bishop Feofilakt and other pilgrims visited Karyes, administrative centre of the Holy Mountain of Athos, and at the Karyes Cathedral venerated the miracle-working Icon of the Mother of God “It is truly meet”. In the building in which the *Holy Community*, the conciliar governing body of all the monasteries of Mt. Athos, holds its meetings, the guests met with the Protopostate of Athos. This year Protopostate is monk Maxim from the Iveron Monastery. Father Maxim told Metropolitan Hilarion about the plans to bring the Icon “It is truly meet” to Thessaloniki for veneration and emphasized that the brethren of the Athos monasteries would be glad if pilgrims from Russia would be able to venerate the shrine.

Then the group headed for the Iveron Monastery where Metropolitan Hilarion said the Akathistos hymn in the Greek language before the miracle-working Iberian Icon of the Mother of God. Archimandrite Nathaniel, hegumen of the monastery, met with the pilgrims. Metropolitan Hilarion and Hegumen Nathaniel discussed the issues related to the future of Orthodoxy, including the difficult situation of Christians in the Middle East. Monks of the Holy Mountain of Athos pray zealously for the Christians who live in the Middle East countries.

Later the pilgrims visited the Konstamonitou Monastery and venerated the Icon of the Mother of God “Showing Mercy”, the ancient icon of the Holy Apostle, Protomartyr and Archdeacon Stephan, and the holy relics of saints.

By the evening, the group arrived at the Serbian Monastery of Chilandar and was met by its hegumen Methodius and the brethren. The pilgrims venerated the miracle-working “Three Hands” Icon of the Mother of God and prayed at the small compline in the monastery’s Cathedral.

On 10 October 2012, Metropolitan Hilarion will officiate at the Divine Liturgy in Chilandar. Then the pilgrims will visit the Bulgarian Zograf Monastery.