



Metropolitan Hilarion prays at churches in Cappadocia

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On 26 June 2010, pilgrims to the holy sites of Cappadocia led by His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria and All Africa, and His Beatitude Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens and All Greece, prayed at the All-Night Vigil celebrated in the Greek and Slavonic languages by clergymen of the Russian Church and the Church of Greece at the Church of Ss. Constantine and Helena in Sinasos (Mustapha-pasha). Attending the service were descendants of the residents of Cappadocia who arrived from Greece, and monks and nuns of the Greek monasteries and convents.

In his homily delivered after the service, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople greeted Metropolitan Hilarion and told the worshipped about his recent visit to the Russian Orthodox Church, mentioning his warm recollections of it.

The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople said: "We have arrived in the land of Cappadocia, which has brought about many saints who shone forth as stars in the sky. Unfortunately, many decades ago the churches had become empty due to the resettlement of Christian residents." His Holiness called different people to maintain fraternal relations and noted with appreciation that the Turkish authorities now give necessary permission to celebrate at the Christian holy sites.

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew spoke about the meaning of the All-Night Vigil celebrated on Sunday eve, saying in conclusion: "The Resurrection of Christ is a source of hope, light, and joy. We have lighted an Easter lamp at the shrine of Christianity in Cappadocia and sung hymns of the victory of life over death. We have venerated the God-Man for Whom there are no distances. WE have brought here incense to commemorate those who are no longer with us and out of love to those who maintain the churches of Ss Constantine and Helena, St. Basil the Great and to all those who are stretching a hand of friendship to us."

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria spoke about historical spiritual ties between the Church of Constantinople and Alexandria.

After the evening service the pilgrims continued visiting holy sites of Cappadocia.

They sang a troparion to St. Nicholas at the former Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Worker located near Sinasos.

At the end of the day, the hierarchs visited the cave monastery of St. Basil the Great in the environs of Sinasos. His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and his companions were met by monks and pilgrims who prayed at the evening service. At the entrance to the monastery they sang a troparion to St. Basil the Great, "O Gladsome Light," and "We praise Thee, O God." The pilgrims saw the extant details of frescoes in the church and sang a troparion "We venerate Thy Cross, O Lord" at the depiction of the Cross in the Slavonic language.

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