



Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk completes his visit to Thailand with laying the foundation of the Holy Trinity Church in Phuket

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Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, on an official visit to Thailand, celebrated the office of laying the foundation of the Church of the Holy Trinity in Phuket on 21 December 2009. Taking part in the celebration were archimandrite Oleg (Cherepanov), representative of the Russian Orthodox Church in Thailand; archpriest Dionisy Poznyaev, rector of the Church of Ss Peter and Paul in Honkong; Rev. Daniel Vanna of the Church of St. Nicholas in Bangkok; and protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant of the DECR chairman.

Attending the celebration were Vice Governor of the Province of Phuket Smith Palawatwichai, the Phuket Mayor Suratin Lianudom, and other representatives of the regional and municipal authorities of Phuket.

After the Divine service archbishop Hilarion addressed the compatriots with his archpastoral word. He noted that "there are different kinds of tourism and different tourists. One, being an inquisitive man, visits new countries to get acquainted with architectural monuments, or works of art. Another has holidays with his family on the shore of a warm sea. Yet, there is a special kind of tourism – pilgrimage. Since the earliest times of the history of Christianity the believers have made pilgrimages to venerate holy places, miraculous icons, or the relics of a saint of God. Pilgrimage demands efforts and activity of people, but is also a source of joy and spiritual consolation."

'The tourists arriving in Phuket wish to rest, thus becoming stronger, while forgetting the inner state of man. Often enough, people get bored after several days of rest and feel empty. This emptiness is a lack of the meaning of life that deprives people of the peace of the soul.'

Archbishop Hilarion underscored that "a believer's physical rest should be combined with spiritual rest. Therefore, it is important to have an opportunity to go to church, pray, attend a divine service, and partake of Holy Communion."

According to archbishop Hilarion, the church under construction will play an important missionary part, bringing witness about Orthodoxy to the locals. 'The church will be a source of joy and consolation and a

place of meeting with God for all who will come here," the DECR chairman said in conclusion.

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