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Patriarch of Bulgaria consecrates UK’s first Bulgarian Orthodox church (+VIDEOS)



His Holiness Patriarch Daniil of Bulgaria visited England over the weekend to consecrate the UK’s first Bulgarian Orthodox church—the dream of several generations of Bulgarians living there.

This is Pat. Daniil’s first official visit abroad since his election as Patriarch in June.

Accompanied by other Bulgarian hierarchs and clergy, His Holiness visited the church, named for the great St. John of Rila and located on the territory of the Bulgarian Embassy in the UK, on Friday to light the new church’s first candle, reports the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency.

The next day, he visited the famous St. John the Baptist Monastery in Essex that was founded by St. Sophrony (Sakharov) to celebrate Memorial Saturday.

Monastery abbot Archimandrite Peter welcomed the Bulgarian Patriarch, saying:

Some years ago, it was said that the holy Orthodox Tradition in Bulgaria is like a sleeping giant. And now we can already see that the holy remnant of the devout Christians, like a charismatic leaven, is able with God's help, to leaven the whole lump of the faithful in Bulgaria.

With this in mind, and with our hearts filled with the desire and hope for this to become reality, we pray that God's providence may find in your person a precious instrument, for the accomplishment of His saving will, which is the awakening of the sleeping giant for the renewal of the Church and the sanctification of the faithful.



In turn, Pat. Daniil spoke about St. Sophrony as "one of the saints with experience in philosophy and insight into Eastern religious and spiritual practices, who came to the understanding that without living in God's will and in God's hands, man can neither reach nor receive God's love."

Abbot Peter gifted the Patriarch an icon of St. Sophrony, and Pat. Daniil in turn gifted the monastery an icon of St. John of Rila.

That evening, Pat. Daniil presided over the Resurrection Vespers with Artoklasia at the Church of St. John of Rila in London. In addition to the Bulgarian hierarchs, also present were His Grace Bishop Nektarije of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of the UK, His Grace Bishop Irenei of the local ROCOR diocese, Archbishop Nikitas of Thyateira of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and clergy from the Antiochian, Serbian, and ROCOR dioceses.

On Sunday morning, the Bulgarian primate celebrated the consecration and Divine Liturgy at the church, together with a host of Bulgarian hierarchs, Abp. Nikitas, and local and visiting clergy. The service was also attended by various cultural and governmental figures.



The service was celebrated in Bulgarian and English.

“The purpose and meaning of the church is to bring together the faithful for the celebration of the Sacraments; in other words, the church becomes a center for the unity of the community of believers,” His Holiness said in his address.

“The Divine Liturgy celebrated here is a call for us to be one in Christ. This is our heartfelt and sincere blessing and message to all of you, brothers and sisters—to be one in Christ. May this newly consecrated Bulgarian church become a gathering place of unity and consensus for all Bulgarians living here.”

The Patriarch also said that from today, this house of God begins its real life as “a home for worship and prayers, a spiritual oasis amidst the vanity of the world, and the spiritual heart” for all Orthodox Bulgarians in England.

Photo: bta.bg

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