

Ecumenical Patriarch describes St John of Rila as 'a golden coin bearing God's imprint'



“St John himself is a golden coin bearing God’s imprint,” His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I said on Monday at Rila Monastery in Bulgaria, where he concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with Patriarch Daniil of Bulgaria.

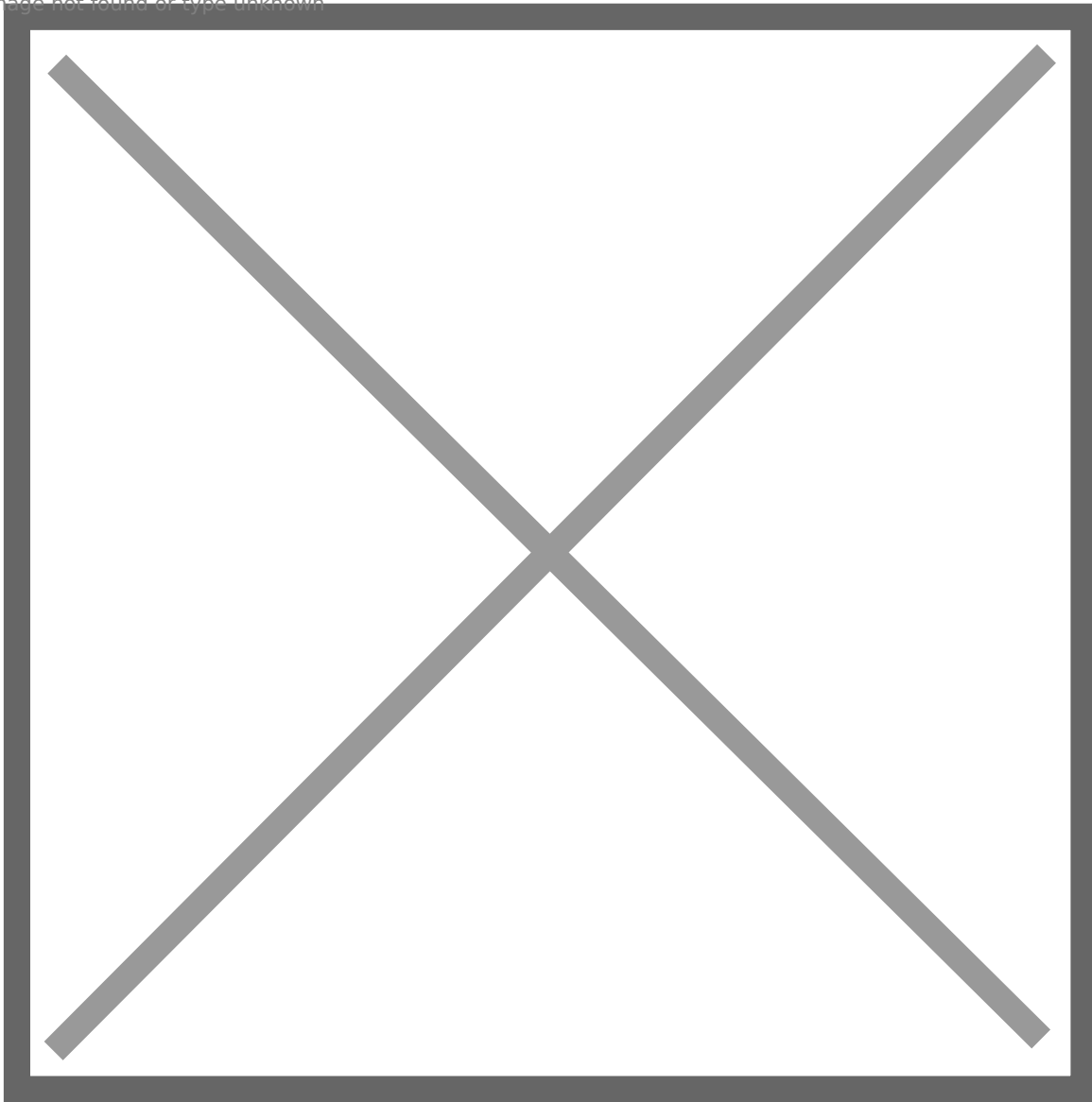
Referring to the saint’s image on Bulgarian currency, Patriarch Bartholomew drew on a saying attributed to St Ignatius the God-Bearer to emphasise St John of Rila’s authentic Christian faith.

The Divine Liturgy took place on 19 October, the feast day of St John of Rila, the monastery’s founder, as the Bulgarian Orthodox Church marked the 1,150th anniversary of his birth and the 1,080th anniversary of his repose.

Rila Monastery, dedicated to the Nativity of the Mother of God, is one of Bulgaria’s most important spiritual centres and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Bulgarians are the children of St John of Rila

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***The Ecumenical Patriarch, together with the hierarchs of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.
Photo credit: Ecumenical Patriarchate / Nikos Papachristou***

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I highlighted the Bulgarian people's deep devotion to St John of Rila.

"There is not a single devout Bulgarian Orthodox Christian who does not consider themselves a child of St John of Rila! You all love him dearly! You venerate him and invoke his intercessions! You honour him!"

His All-Holiness emphasised that the saint exemplifies authentic Christian faith and devotion.

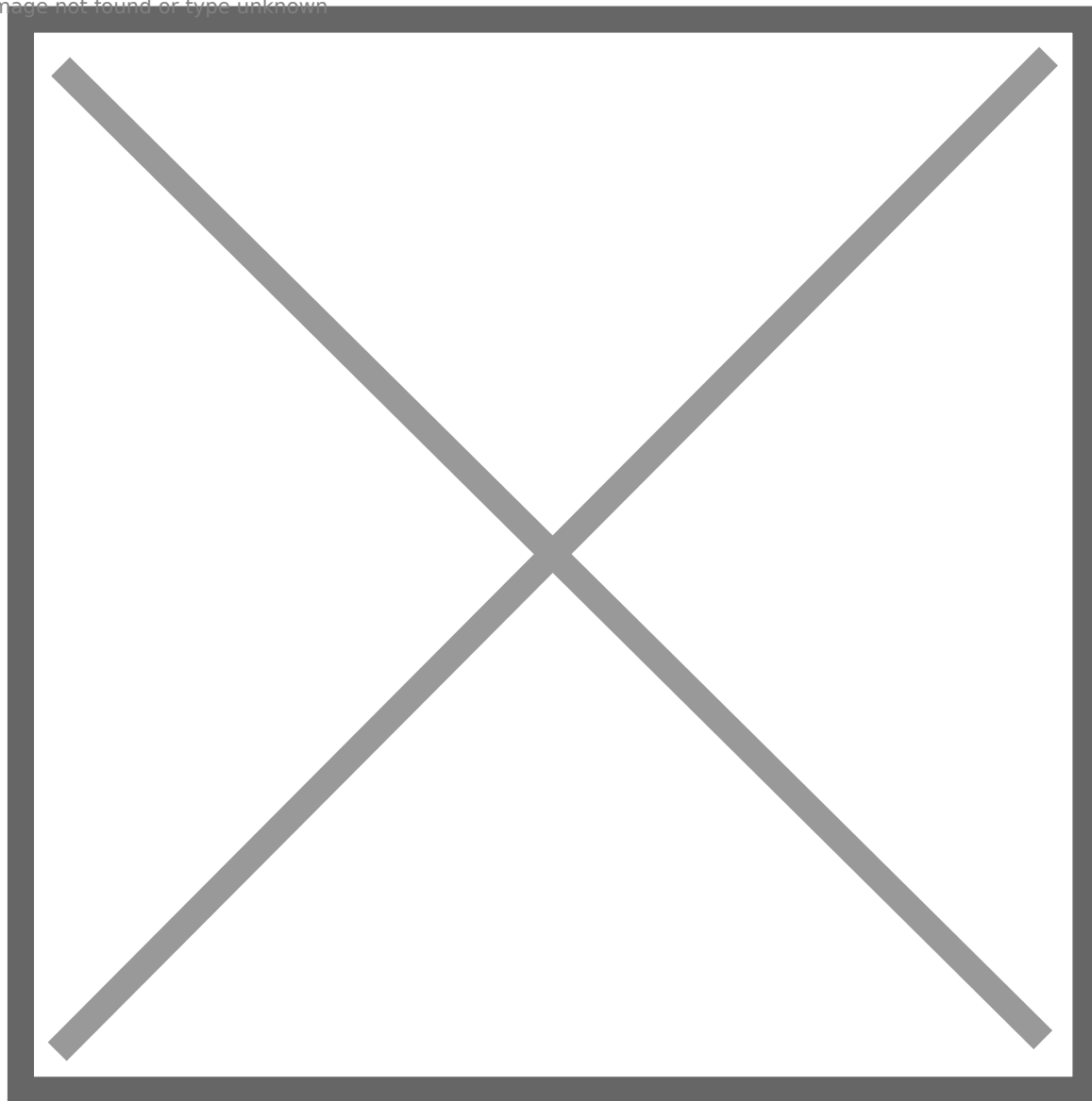
"And St John of Rila was not merely devout! Free from every form of counterfeiting, adulteration or falsification in matters of faith and Gospel living, he was a standard

and model of godliness!”

The Patriarch’s words continued the imagery of the golden coin, contrasting the saint’s spiritual life with anything counterfeit or distorted.

Fifty-seven years since the Ecumenical Patriarch’s priestly ordination

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His All-Holiness Bartholomew I embracing His Beatitude Patriarch Daniil. Photo credit: Ecumenical Patriarchate / Nikos Papachristou

Patriarch Daniil of Bulgaria emphasised the importance of the Ecumenical Patriarch’s presence at the celebration honouring St John of Rila, regarded as the father of Bulgarian Orthodox monasticism.

His Beatitude also recalled that 19 October marked the 57th anniversary of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew's ordination to the priesthood.

Patriarch Daniil said that concelebrating the Divine Liturgy on this anniversary was a particular blessing.

Those attending the Divine Liturgy included former King Simeon of Bulgaria, who recited the Creed; Despina Koukouloupoulou, Greece's Ambassador to Sofia; Greek MP Maximos Charakopoulos, Secretary-General of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy; and representatives of the authorities.

The Ecumenical Patriarch's visit to Bulgaria



Group photo in front of the church of Rila Monastery in Bulgaria. Photo credit: Ecumenical Patriarchate / Nikos Papachristou

His All-Holiness's visit to Bulgaria began on Saturday with an official reception at the Synodal Palace in Sofia.

On that occasion, the two Primates attended a service of thanksgiving and inaugurated the exhibition Mount Athos in Sofia, featuring works by Greek painter Efthymios Varlamis (1942–2016).

The Ecumenical Patriarch and the Bulgarian Patriarch also concelebrated the Divine Liturgy on Sunday at the Patriarchal Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky in Sofia.

Later, Patriarch Bartholomew I officiated a memorial service at the tomb of the late Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria, located at St Kyriaki Metropolitan cathedral.

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