

## **Delegation of pilgrims from North American Archdiocese of Antioch on a visit to St. Petersburg**



On May 19, 2019, the fourth Sunday after Pascha, Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in the St. Alexander Nevsky Laura. Among his concelebrants were the head of the Archdiocese of Antioch in North America, Archbishop Joseph of New York and Metropolitan of All North America, who came to the northern capital city with a group of pilgrims; Metropolitan Niphon of Philppople, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Bishop Nazary of Kronstadt, rector of the laura, and its brethren; Archpriest Sergiy Kuksevich, secretary of the diocesan administration and other clergy.

The day before, the hierarchs from the Orthodox Church of Antioch concelebrated All-Night Vigil together with the head of the Metropolis of St. Petersburg at the St Nicholas Navy Church of the Epiphany.

In his homily after the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Varsonofy noted, "Today we

have a great joy as a large delegation of the Patriarchate of Antioch has come to our city from North America. It is led by Archbishop Joseph. I am delighted to see you in Sankt-Petersburg. Our heart is overfilled today with Paschal joy, and our brothers from the Church of Antioch have enhanced this joy by their coming. We have prayed together today and took communion during the Divine Liturgy and showed that there is nothing better and more beautiful than our brothers living together us (cf. Ps. 132:1). We pray together and feel keenly for the unity of Orthodoxy in the world, and such services as today's help us preserve this unity. I would like to wish you pleasant impressions from visiting shrines and cultural places in Sankt-Petersburg, so that you may leave this place enriched by what you have seen'.

His Eminence presented crosses and pectoral icons to Metropolitans Joseph and Niphon, pectoral crosses to the clergy of the delegation, and an icon of Ss Peter and Paul to the deacon.

Metropolitan Joseph thanked His Eminence Varsonofy for the common prayer and expressed joy at visiting St. Petersburg. 'We have felt the hospitality of your people and feel it here as in the fold of the common Church. And we are glad that today we all have prayed together', he said, 'Vising this country, we can feel her spiritual integrity and seek to adopt the experience of great people who lived in it. We learn much from you, learn the lessons of the history of your people. Unfortunately, we in America do not have what we see here: we have churches and the faithful, but we do not have such a long and rich history. Without such history, we miss something very important. We have come with the special aim to celebrate together with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on his name day, to receive his blessing and to share with your people the joy of this day. The Patriarchates of Antioch and Moscow have been brothers for centuries. And we continue living in the spirit of brotherly love between our two Patriarchates'.

The guest invited His Eminence Varsonofy to visit North America and presented him with an icon of St. Raphael of Brookline (with a part of the saint's relics) and St. Tikhon (Belavin) explaining that in his time Patriarch Tikhon was the initiator of the consecration of St. Raphael as bishop.