



## **Round-table conference in USA on cooperation between Russian Orthodox Church and expatriates in North America and Oceania**

On August 24, 2012, a round-table conference was held at the Russian Center in San Francisco under the theme 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Expatriates: An Experience of Cooperation in North America and Oceania. It was organized together by the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations and the Russian Federation Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The first conference devoted to cooperation between the Russian Church and Russian-speaking diaspora was held in June 2009 in Brussels, the second one in August 2010 in Buenos Aires and the third one in December 2011 in Beijing.

The present conference was timed to the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Fort Ross, the first Russian settlement in California and to the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of canonical unity within the Russian Orthodox Church.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, DECR chairman, came to San Francisco to take part in the celebrations in Fort Ross and the round-table conference.

Among those who came to the capital of California for the conference were hierarchs, clergy and representatives of expatriates' organizations in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and the USA.

The plenary session was opened by the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York. Among the speakers were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA, Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal and Canada, Bishop Peter of Cleveland, administrator of the dioceses of Chicago and mid-America, Bishop Theodosius of Seattle, Hegumen Philaret, DECR vice-chairman, Ms. A. Safonova, deputy director for the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for expatriates, V. Vinokurov, Russian general consul in San Francisco. Ms. N. Norochinskaya, president of the Historical Perspective Foundation, and V. Istratov, deputy executive director of the Russian World Foundation.

During the forum, which was held the spirit of mutual understanding, the episcopate, clergy, diplomats and representatives of expatriates' organizations considered problems involved in the support of Russian-speaking diaspora in North America and Oceania. Participants shared their experience in organizing expatriates' religious life, extra-liturgical fellowship, and assistance to brothers and sisters in adapting to local conditions in the county of residence.

The work was summed up in a communique.

After that the participants came to the Cathedral of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted of the ROCOR diocese of San Francisco and Western America to see the church, which for many decades has been a place of prayer and fellowship for Russian expatriates of various emigration waves. They sang a prayer

at the holy relics of St. John, Archbishop of Shanghai and the Miracle-worker of San Francisco.

*DECR Communication Service*

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