In Strasbourg His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe



On 27 May 2019, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visited the Council of Europe in Strasbourg and met with the Secretary General of this organization, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland.

They were joined in the meeting by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; and Archimandrite Philip (Ryabykh), representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Council of Europe and rector of the Parish of All Saints in Strasbourg.

Representing the Council of Europe were also Ms. Leyla Kayacik, Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General; Mr. Alexandre Guessel, Director of Political Advice; Mr. Daniel Holtgen, Director of Communications; and Ms. Irène Kitsou-Milonas, adviser to the Private Office of the Secretary General.

Mr. Ivan Soltanovsky, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe, took part in the meeting on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland warmly greeted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and congratulated him on the consecration of the Church of All Saints in Strasbourg that had taken place the day before.

Mr. Jagland also greeted members of the delegation accompanying His Holiness on his visit, mentioning the fruitful cooperation with Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) at the time of his service as representative of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Council of Europe in various matters, in particular, in choosing a place for the construction of the church. “I am very glad that by now this church in Strasbourg has been built,” Mr. Jagland said.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe emphasized that among the tasks of this organization is defence of the freedom of religion and promotion of interfaith dialogue.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill cordially thanked Mr. Jagland for the warm greeting, saying, “We met on repeated occasions, and I have always highly appreciated our meetings.”

Having noted an important role of such organization as the Council of Europe, His Holiness said, in particular, “Any human association requires concrete foundations. Without such foundations human associations cannot function – they prove to be unstable and often disintegrate. And the Council of Europe has built and now maintains the foundation that makes the integration of the European countries possible. I am referring not to military or economic factors, but to the main thing that concerns human life. Human rights and freedoms are what either unites or divides. We hold the Council of Europe in respect because its activities help unite people.”

The participants in the meeting discussed prospects of developing relationships between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Council of Europe, as well as the issues pertaining to the defence of human rights, including the rights of believers.

DECR Communication Service

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