



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with delegations of Local Orthodox Churches that arrived in Moscow for celebrations marking 10th anniversary of 2009 Local Council and Patriarchal enthronement**

On 31 January 2019, at the Patriarchal and Synodal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill met with delegations of the Local Orthodox Churches that had assembled in Moscow to take part in the celebrations marking the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 2009 Local Council and Patriarchal enthronement.

Taking part in the meeting were:

- Metropolitan Theophilaktos of Tripoli and Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrene – representing the Orthodox Church of Alexandria;
- Archmandrite Stephan (Dispirakis) – representing the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem;
- Metropolitan Andrea of Gori and Ateni, Bishop Vakhtang of Nikortsminda and Archpriest Kakhaber Gogotishvili – representing the Georgian Orthodox Church;
- Metropolitan Niphon of Târgoviște, Archpriest Adrian Ghibanu and Priest Eugeniu Rogoti – representing the Romanian Orthodox Church;
- Metropolitan Kipriyan of Stara Zagora, Metropolitan Daniel of Vidin, Archmandrite Feoktis (Dimitrov), Archimandrite Anfim (Manoilov), Hieromonk Tsvetan Ivanov and Archpriest Jivko Jeleu – representing the Bulgarian Orthodox Church;
- Archpriest Abel of Lublin and Chelm, Archpriest Jerzy Lukaszewicz and Deacon Andrzej Dawidziuk – representing the Polish Orthodox Church.

Among those present at the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Roman of Yakutsk and Lensk; Archbishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania; Bishop Iriney of Orsk and Gai; Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuyevo; Bishop Ioann of Domodedovo; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia delivered an address, saying in particular:

“Every time we, representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches, meet, we can not only pray together, which is, of course, essential to such assemblies, but also discuss issues that worry us all.”

Patriarch Kirill mentioned the developments in ecclesiastical life in Ukraine that, he emphasized, went beyond the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church. The Patriarchate of Constantinople accepted into communion without repentance the Ukrainian schismatics, including former metropolitan Filaret, anathematized by the Russian Orthodox Church, and “hierarchs” of the schismatic groups who have no canonical ordination. The so-called “unification council” was held in Ukraine in order to legalize the election of the head of the new “unified church.” Taking part in that gathering were only two out of ninety canonical hierarchs of Ukraine. “That is why we do not recognize this “council” and regard its decisions as void, having no canonical force,” His Holiness also said, “However, this action caused many difficulties for the canonical Church. As the schism is supported by the governmental authorities, they are now fighting against the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Its episcopate and clergy are being brought under pressure. At a parish level, church buildings of our Church are being seized.”

“Our Church was compelled to respond to these uncanonical deeds... With great sorrow we took a decision to break off the Eucharistic communion with the Patriarch of Constantinople because of his direct involvement in the legalization of the schism in Ukraine,” Patriarch Kirill added.

As the Primate of the Russian Church noted, Constantinople’s involvement in the Ukrainian affairs poses a number of very important ecclesiological and canonical questions for the Local Orthodox Churches. “What does primacy in the Orthodox Church mean? We have always believed that this primacy implies the concept of “first among equal.” Yet, if the first among equal expresses a readiness to interfere in the life of other Local Orthodox Churches, disregarding their autocephalous status, it means something more. A concept of “first without equal” emerges, posing a challenge for all of us. We need to ponder on it and, I suppose, at some point to find an opportunity to discuss these new developments that, undoubtedly, can affect and do affect the life of any of the Local Orthodox Churches.”

In continuation of the meeting members of the delegations of the Local Orthodox Churches read out greetings to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his enthronement.

*DECR Communication Service/*

*Photo by Patriarchal Press Service*