Patriarch Kirill meets with Byelorussian President Alexander Lukashenko



October 15, 2018 – His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, met with the President of the Republic of Belarus, Alexander G. Lukashenko, at the Independence Palace in Minsk.

The president met the patriarch at the main entry to the palace. Participating in the welcome ceremony were also guards of honour.

His Holiness and President Lukashenko proceeded to the fireplace hall where they exchanged greetings. The president addressed His Holiness, saying,

> ‘Dear Vladyka, I welcome you in our and your dear Belarus. On the eve of our meetings, I always recall the period of your service of the Church before you were elevated to the patriarchal rank. We in Belarus have very warm remembrances of that period. As I have already told you, I

remember your trips from Smolensk to Kaliningrad surely via our Belarus. Perhaps, since that time you have fallen in love in this land not strange to you.

Now it is very relevant. I wish that you clearly understand my position, though I try not to make any statements, but there is no getting away from it. Unfortunately, very often in its history our Church would become a hostage to inter-state relations, to our sometimes-wrong actions. God sees everything and He will make out who is right and who is wrong. But you should be aware of our unshakable public position: a schism is always bad, and its consequences are more dangerous than anything else is.

Therefore, what is taking place in Orthodoxy today is very painful for us. The world – Your Holiness, you can feel it no less and perhaps even more strongly than I cab because your feel by your heart – the world has changed, and not for the better. The whole population of our planet is becoming hostages… And I wish wisdom and patience to you and all the hierarchs of our Church. And we as parishioners will try to support the unity of all in order to preserve peace on earth, for we have come too close to the dangerous line.

Your coming to Minsk, to Belarus, today is very vital. Perhaps, the Lord has predetermined it that at some serious moments we find ourselves, both politicians and clergy, in Minsk. I very much appreciate it, and it binds us in many ways. And we, Your Holiness, will cope with it'.

In this response, Patriarch Kirill said,

'By God's mercy. Thank you, Your Excellency, dear Mr. President, Alexander Grigoryevich,

Whenever I come to Byelorussia, I am in good mood. And you are right, a very large part of my life is linked with Byelorussia, though I did not live here but was in transit here almost every three weeks. I saw how Byelorussia lived and can compare what was in the 1990s with what it has become now. The changes are great. When you come to Byelorussia, especially to Minsk, you see vast spaces, beautiful clean street filled with air, and you understand: the authorities pay special attention to the quality of people's life. Because life in big cities is linked with stresses, and if such a comfortable space is created in a big city, it means that people are thought about here.

Today, very many problems come from our technological development. Whether we want it or not, the human civilization is developing in such a way that, because of the sinful desire to increase consumption by each individual (and this desire is sinful), the industry develops willy-

nilly, hence the pollution of the environment and many other things detrimental to man. Therefore the concern of the authorities for the environment, for the cultural milieu, for the spiritual environment shows that the principal strategic goals and tasks, on which the future of humanity depends, are taken into consideration.

I would like to thank you for your attitude to the Byelorussian Orthodox Church and to the issues we have briefly discussed. Indeed, the quality of human life is what determines the success of the work of politicians. And this quality includes not only the level of wages but also all that surrounds people and ensures their wellbeing.

I would like to stress once again the happy state of religious life in Byelorussia. And in the first place, I would like to thank you for the church-state relations in the dialogue between the Byelorussian government and the Byelorussian Orthodox Church'.

As a memento of the meeting, the Primate of the Russian Church conveyed to the head of state the Tikhvin Icon of the Mother of God.

After the their talk, Mr. Lukashenko and Patriarch Kirill moved to the Grand Hall where the president met with members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Synod of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church.

Patriarchal Press Service

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