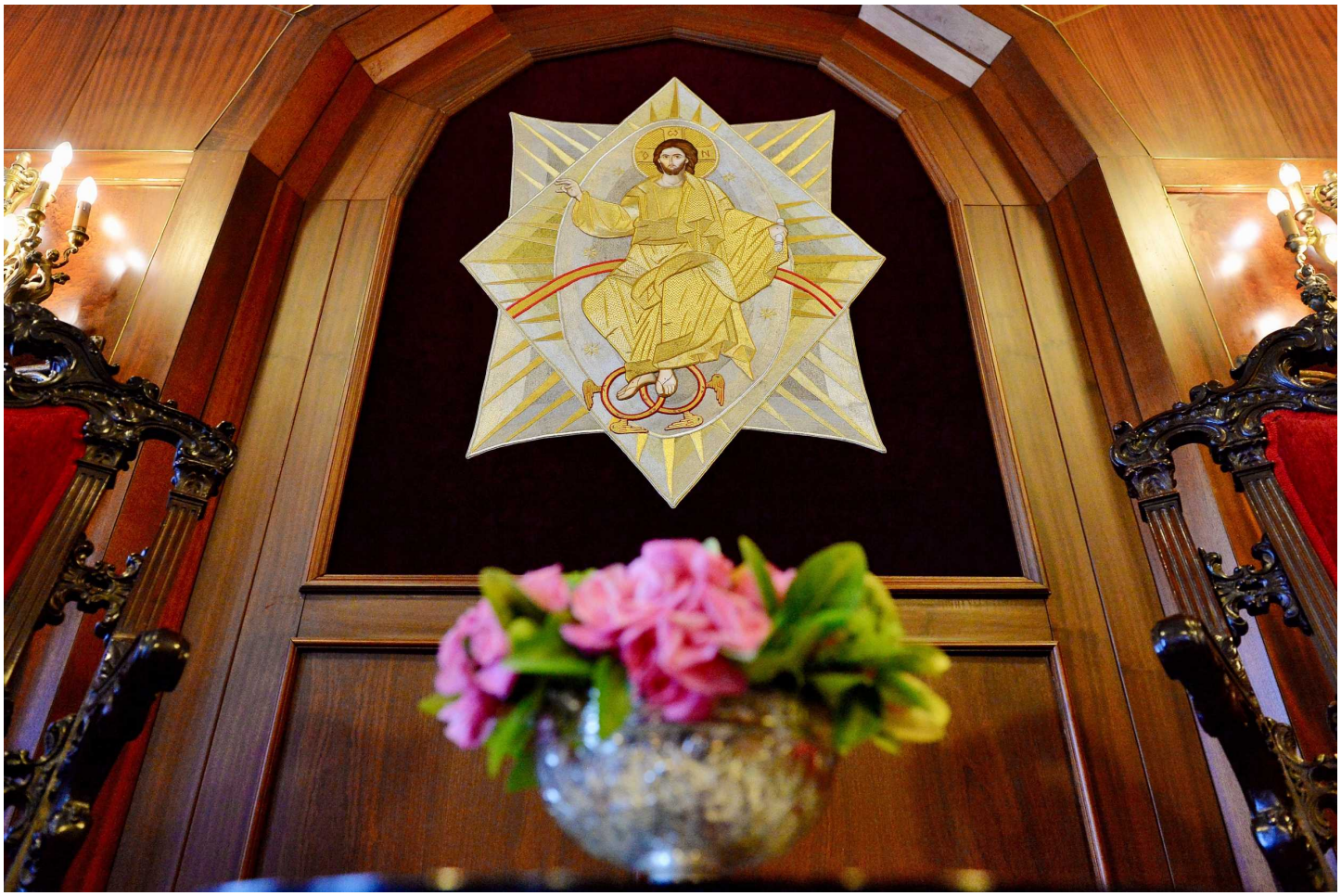
Primates of Church of Constantinople and Russian Orthodox Church have begun their meeting



August 31, 2018 – His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russian has arrived in Istanbul.

At Ataturk Airport, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was met by Metropolitan Gennadios of Sassima (Patriarchate of Constantinople) and Russian Consul General in Istanbul A. Podjelyshev.

Patriarch Kirill visited the Patriarchal Cathedral of St. George in Phanar. Then Patriarchs Bartholomew and Kirill began their meeting at the Patriarchate of Constantinople's Throne Hall.

Participating in the meeting are Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and members of the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Greeting Patriarch Bartholomew, the Primate of the Russian Church said,

‘Your Holiness, I am delighted to have this opportunity to meet with you and members of the Synod. Whenever I come to this place, I recall very important moments of our common history. In each epoch, our Churches would encounter various challenges and problems, which came, in the first place, from the surrounding world, but we, by God’s grace, would always find a common language, a common understanding of what should be done to preserve the unity of the Church and meet challenges of time.

‘I think there is a difference between a dialogue held by politicians and a dialogue held by us. In a dialogue held by politicians, each asserts the interests of his own country, whereas a dialogue held within the Orthodox Church has a different nature. We represent the interests of our own Churches, of course, but we always bear in mind our common welfare, the unity of the Holy Church and her ability to carry out her mission in the modern world. The dialogue between Local Churches takes place within one Body – the Body of one Holy Apostolic Church, which places responsibility and commitments on us but at the same time gives us strength and inspiration.

That is why, despite the fact that all kinds of discussions were held in this building, sometimes rather difficult, I have very bright memories of this place because we have never done anything that could harm universal Orthodoxy, one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, as indeed. we are responsible for the whole Church, for the whole Body of Christ; we as Primates of Local Churches.

I would like to thank personally you for the atmosphere you create here. I cherish warm memories of all our meetings beginning from 1977. I hope that the next generation of hierarchs will draw an example, among other things, from the history of our relations. We really used to go through enormous difficulties but always managed to reach necessary goals. Of course, it happened because, along with our infirm powers, present in this dialogue, in this enormous work, was the grace of God. We believe that now too the Lord will be with us.

I would like once again to wholeheartedly greet you, Your Holiness, and beloved archpastors – members of the Synod’.

In his response, the Primate of the Church of Constantinople, noted,

‘We are glad to receive today in the Ecumenical Patriarchate His Beatitude and Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and his fellow travelers. Whenever we meet, it is a joy for both of us because we have an opportunity to discuss matters of mutual concern.

‘We believe in the power of dialogue. If political leaders use dialogue to solve the problems of their countries, the more so we, religious leaders, should use the way of dialogue for solving problems. The

more so that dialogue is a way shown to us by God Himself.

‘We are glad that today’s visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill coincides with a meeting of the Holy Synod. So, the Holy Synod members are present here in full force. As you know, our Holy Synod meets each month and the meeting continues for three days. And from morrow to Monday evening, there will be a Bishops’ Council of our Church, which will be attended by all the acting metropolitans of our Patriarchate.

‘The last time when we assembled for this Bishops’ Council was three years ago. The work was very successful, fruitful, and we decided then to gather together for such a meeting every three years.

‘Tomorrow we will celebrate the beginning of a new church year with the participation of the Patriarch and all the bishops. On September 1, our church year begins; this date was established by my predecessor Demetrios of the blessed memory, and on this day we lift up special prayers for the environment. As you know, as part of this ecological initiative, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has held very important and serious symposia and conferences; the latest symposium was held in June 2018 in the Attica region. We plan to hold a similar conference next June here, in Constantinople’.

Patriarchal Press Service

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Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/47243/