# His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with delegations of the Local Orthodox Churches that arrived in Moscow for the celebrations marking the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia



On 27 July 2018, at the Patriarchal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the delegations of the Local Orthodox Churches that had assembled in Moscow for the celebrations marking the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.

Taking part in the meeting were:

- on behalf of the Orthodox Church of Antioch – Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia;
- on behalf of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem – Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth; Archimandrite Stephan (Dispirakis), representative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Rev. Ioannis (Shama);

- on behalf of the Georgian Orthodox Church – Bishop Vakhtang of Nikortsminda;
- on behalf of the Serbian Orthodox Church - Bishop Irinej of Bačka, Bishop Stefan of Remezija, Deacon Miroslav Nikolič, Deacon Ivan Vasiljevič;
- on behalf of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus - Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos, Archimandrite Stelios (Stylianou);
- on behalf of the Polish Orthodox Church - Archbishop Jeremiasz of Wrocław and Szczecin, Hieromonk Spyridon (Kuziak);
- on behalf of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia - Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Hieromonk Alexandr (Galushka).

Among the participants in the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Archbishop Matfei of Yegoryevsk; Bishop Paramon of Bronnitsy; Bishop Ioann of Domodedovo; Bishop Pyotr of Lukhovitsy; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations.

Greeting all those present, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia noted the spiritual and historical importance of the Baptism of Russia by the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles, as well as the importance of Kiev as the Mother of the Russian cities and the place where the Russian Orthodoxy had come into being. Describing the situation of Orthodoxy in Ukraine, His Holiness said, "Now the forces, alien to Orthodoxy, are making deliberate efforts to destroy the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church. The strongest pressure is being put on the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church: on its Primate, Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine, on its bishops, clergy and laypeople. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is suffering a large-scale discrimination. The Ukrainian politicians have come forward with an initiative to create, on the basis of schismatic groups, the so-called "one local church" and to grant autocephaly to it.

"In this gravest situation the support of the fraternal Local Orthodox Churches is invaluable to us. On behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church I ask you to convey to the Primates, the Holy Synods and all the hierarchs our sincere and profound gratitude. The Russian Orthodox Church, basing itself on the inviolable sacred canons and irrefutable documental evidence, will never repudiate its Dnieper baptismal font, the tradition going back to the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles, and other right-believing Kievan princes, Metropolitans of Kiev of godly wisdom, venerable fathers of the Kiev Lavra of the Caves and other great Russian saints."

As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted, today the anti-church powers are trying to shatter the unity of the universal Orthodoxy, and the attempts to artificially tear the Ukrainian Orthodox Church away from the Moscow Patriarchate may lead to a catastrophe of pan-Orthodox scale.

The delegates of the Local Orthodox Churches conveyed to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greetings from the Primates of their Churches on the occasion of the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.

Addressing the Primate of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, said in particular, “We feel the attention you devote to the Orthodox world, as well as your support for the Christians of the Middle East and for our Church in this time of hardships.”

Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth (Orthodox Church of Jerusalem) expressed his joy over the opportunity to visit Moscow and celebrate the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.

“On these days of hardships, full of temptations, wars and bloodsheds, unity and joint prayer alone can help us cope with this situation,” Bishop Vakhtang of Nikortsminda (Georgian Orthodox Church) noted in his address.

Greeting His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, Bishop Irinej of Bačka (Serbian Orthodox Church) said in particular, “The Serbian Orthodox Church is not a large Church, but we try and will try to respond with gratitude and brotherly love to what you do for us, and to support you in your ordeals. It was like that when our ancestors offered shelter and new home to those who had to leave their homeland forever after the October revolution, and it is like that now, when there is a crisis in Ukraine. You can always rely on our participation in its overcoming.”

On behalf of His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos of New Justiniana and All Cyprus, Metropolitan Georgios of Paphos assured Patriarch Kirill that the Orthodox Church of Cyprus would always support the Russian Church in its position concerning the granting of autocephaly in Ukraine. The hierarch also noted the necessity to preserve the unity of Orthodoxy in order to bear joint witness before the modern civilization that had gone far away from the Christian principles.

In his address Archbishop Jeremiasz of Wrocław and Szczecin (Polish Orthodox Church) said, in particular, “Your Holiness, allow me on behalf of the Polish Orthodox Church, which also considers the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia to be its feast, because we too came out of the Kievan Font, to thank you for the invitation, for your paternal love and prayers, as well as for your warm hospitality and amazing atmosphere of the celebrations.”

Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, read out a message from His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav. “We are praying for the unity of the longsuffering Ukrainian people and the Holy Church, for its peace and prosperity,” the letter read in particular, “We believe that by the intercession

and prayers of the Holy Prince Vladimir before God's Altar the All-Generous Lord will strengthen peace and unity of the fraternal peoples blessed by the holy Baptism in one font and enlightened by the sermons and ascetic deeds of all those saints who laid down their lives for the sake of the Holy Orthodoxy."

*DECR Communication Service*

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