



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill leads 18th award ceremony of International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations



On 23 May 2018, in the Hall of Church Councils of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia led the 18<sup>th</sup> annual ceremony of awarding the Patriarch Alexy II Prize of the International Public Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations. The prize is granted “For the Outstanding Activities in Strengthening the Unity of the Orthodox Christian Nations. For Upholding and Promoting Christian Values in the Life of Society.”

The 2017 prize winners were His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia and Mr. Viktor Zubkov, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Gazprom Public Joint Stock Company, Russia’s Special Presidential Representative for Cooperation with the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, chairman of the Board of the Charity Foundation for the Restoration of the New Jerusalem Stavropegic Monastery of the Holy Resurrection.

Attending the ceremony were Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Arseny of Istra, Patriarchal first vicar for Moscow; Archbishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Archbishop Antony of Vienna and Budapest, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad; Bishop Foefilakt of Dmitrov, father superior of the Monastery of St. Andrew; Bishop Ioann of Domodedovo; and Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman. Among those present were also representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches to the Moscow Patriarchal Throne: Bishop Antonije of Moravici (Serbian Orthodox Church), Archimandrite Feoktist (Dimitrov) (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky) (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), and Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk (Orthodox Church in America); as well as Bishop Irinej of Bačka and other members of the Serbian Orthodox Church's delegation, the Russian statesmen and public figures, ambassadors, diplomats, and laureates of the previous years.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church greeted the prize winners and participants in the ceremony.

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia also delivered a speech, saying in particular:

"In 2002, at a time of hardships for the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Serbian people, my predecessor, Patriarch Pavle of blessed memory, received this prize from the late Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia. I regard this award not as a prize for me personally, but as a dear token of love and care for all the Serbian people. I wholeheartedly thank the board of trustees and the president of this foundation for considering me worthy of this honour. It is a symbol of support for our people and for our Church, which suffers terrible persecution in Kosovo and Metohija and has to defend her centuries-old rights in the countries of former Yugoslavia for bringing the Holy Orthodoxy to the world and for remaining firm in the faith of the fathers."

An address by Mr. Viktor Zubkov followed. "Russia's future is inseparable from its spiritual heritage. By combining our efforts we can not only preserve, but also multiply this wealth. Therefore our cooperation with the Russian Orthodox Church and with the International Public Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations will continue," the laureate said.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and Mr. Valery Alexeyev, president of the foundation, presented the prizes to His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia and to Mr. Viktor Zubkov.

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