Patriarch Kirill meets with President of Albania

April 30, 2018 – His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, during his visit to the Albanian Orthodox Church, met with President of Albania Mr. Ilir Meta.

Participating in the talk, which was held at the residence of the head of the state in Tirana, was His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania.

Patriarch Kirill was accompanied by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate administrative secretariat, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations, and Rev. Alexander Volkov, head of the Patriarchal press service.

Among those present were also Russian Ambassador to Albania A. Karpushin, representatives of the Presidential Office, including secretary general Alqi Bllako, chief of cabinet Arben Cici, diplomatic adviser Walter Ibrahimi, mass media adviser Tedi Blushi, local self-government adviser Illi Asllani, and public relation director Edwin Schwart.

Greeting His Holiness, Mr. Ilir Meta stressed that ‘it is a very important visit not only because it is the first visit of such a high level to our country, but also by virtue of the irreplaceable role played by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russian in ensuring religious harmony in the world’.

‘I would like to assure you that our country will continue to be a model of harmonious co-existence of the religious communities because it is a decisive factor in preserving peace both in our region and on the whole globe’, he stressed.

On his part, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church thanked the head of the state and in his person the people of Albania for the warm welcome. ‘It is the first ever visit of a Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to Albania’, His Holiness stressed, ‘I was here in 2003 and can compare what it was at that time and what it is now. I would like to say that Albania has made a very large step forward in her development. A completely different country has appeared before me: along with its remarkable nature, what attracts attention are new beautiful buildings, roads, good agriculture. Everuthing I could see made a good impression on me’.

Especially noticeable, His Holiness said, are changes in the religious life. ‘The magnificent Cathedral of

the Resurrection of Christ, in which we celebrated the liturgy; it is in some sense a symbol of not only religious resurrection but generally a symbol of Albania's resurrection, a symbol of new life', Patriarch Kirill stated.

His Holiness made a special mention of the role played by His Beatitude Anastasios in preserving religious accord and cooperation in the country.

'In your presence I would like to thank His Beatitude Anastasios for his Abraham's hospitality and certainly for the great work he has carried out to build up the Orthodox community in this country. We have very warm and good relations between the Churches. His Beatitude Anastasios has been to our country many times. We attach a great importance to such fraternal visits', Patriarch Kirill said.

The President of Albania responded saying, 'Our country is not very big but God has rewarded us with whatever one likes: two beautiful seas, lakes, endless rivers, mountains, fields – everything you need. We attempted for several decades to live without faith in the Lord, but it was a failure. One of the gifts with which the Lord has endowed us is Archbishop Anastasios, who, as you noted, has carried out an incredible work for the rebirth of the Albanian Orthodox Church'.

Mr. Ilir Meta mentioned the important role played by the Primate of the Albanian Orthodox Church in ensuring peaceful co-existence among the religious communities in the country and in the joint efforts made by the religious leaders to this end.

'As you have rightly said, faith has a great importance for building peace and stability in the country. For us the indispensable role of the religious communities and their leaders in Albania is doubtless', the president said addressing Patriarch Kirill.

In the course of the talk, there was a discussion on tourist exchanges as an important factor for bringing peoples closer together. The interlocutors also discussed the challenges facing the modern society.

> 'Many teach us today: in order to build a happy life with justice it is sufficient to have a concentration of capital, economic might, military power, thriving science, social doctrines', Patriarch Kirill said, 'Very rich countries would say to us: live like we do and everything will be fine and you will reach the goal. I cry at the top of my voice to the whole world: nothing will come of it if humanity rejects God. There will be wealth but no happiness. There will be power but no justice. And we see what is happening now: terrible crises are shaking humanity. International law, international institutions, international organizations – all seems to work for peace and justice in the world but there is neither peace nor justice'.

Patriarch Kirill said that he repeatedly discussed the topic of peace and justice with Archbishop Anastasios in various times and that ‘the life experience of our countries should convince very many that without faith, without moral values supported by faith, it is impossible to build neither a happy family, nor a happy society, nor a happy world order’.

DECR Communication Service

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