



Patriarch Kirill's interview to the state Albanian Radio and Television company

During his visit to Albania, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia gave an interview to a correspondent of Albanian Radio and Television.

- Your Holiness, what is the purpose of your visit to the Albanian Orthodox Church?

- It is a peace visit to a fraternal Orthodox Church. We call a peace visit an official visit of a Patriarch after his election to the Patriarchal see. I was elected nine years ago, but I could not visit Albania earlier. For this reason, it is with special feeling that I make this official peace visit to the sister Local Albanian Orthodox Church.

- Is the reason for the visit your 50-year-long friendship with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios or you have some other message for the Albanian people?

- I have already said that it is an official visit to a fraternal Local Church. But the fact that His Beatitude Archbishop Athanasios and I have known each other for fifty years and are friends certainly gives this visit quite a special colour.

I wanted very much to see His Beatitude Anastasios, Primate of the Albanian Church, in the place where he serves. We know him as an outstanding missionary, as a man who worked much to spread Orthodoxy in the world, including in the African continent. We know him as an expert in the history of Orthodox mission. And today I have an opportunity to see the results of his missionary work here, in Albania. I am very much impressed by what I see. I thank God for the gifts His Beatitude Anastasios has and realizes on the paths of his missionary service.

The Albanian Church has gone through the severest of trails and was actually completely destroyed. But today we see the restoration of church life, the construction of many churches and social and educational establishments. And the most important thing is that the Albanian Church today can speak with her people in an understandable language. It is very important that a Church should have an opportunity to address people in a language they understand and helps them comprehend what Christianity is in history.

- Your Holiness, what is the role of religion in the struggle with terrorism and radicalism?

- I believe the role of religion is considerable because radical groups are often inspired by a false interpretation of religious doctrines or justify their extremism by a desire to please God. I can see no other argumentation than religious that could be capable of disarming the ideological basis of radicalism and terrorism. If radicals appeal to religious truths and use religious ideas to motivate their extremist actions, then it is religion alone that can refute this all. Only religious organizations can address their faithful to help them understand the falsehood of the very preaching carried out by extremists, to become aware of the danger it presents to both people's spiritual state and their physical existence.

- In your view, should religion interfere in politics?

- I believe religion and politics cannot be the two sides of the same coin; these are phenomena of a completely different order.

Politics is a way of governing a people, masses; it is a way of governing a state and building relations between states.

Religion lies in a completely different sphere. Lying in the center of a religious message is the human soul, consciousness and morality. And a religious message is aimed to help a person to live a dignified life in this world, to avoid making mistakes and being misled and destroying one's own personality and the lives of other people.

Politicians work in a different sphere – international relations or state governance. But it is my deep conviction that the Church has the right to make a moral evaluation of a particular policy, particular political leaders precisely with the aim to safeguard people including their own faithful against the political actions which can inflict a spiritual or material damage on them.

- Your Holiness, do you consider your common liturgy with the Primate of the Albanian Church to be a sign of pastoral unity?

- The common celebration with the Primate of the Albanian Church is a sign of both pastoral, spiritual and doctrinal unity. His Beatitude Archbishop Athanasios and I are in one Church – the Orthodox Church. We perform a common cause, each in the place to which the Lord has sent us, and work with the people who are our own flock.

I would like to address the Albanian people and wish them prosperity, peace and peace of the soul. At a time when our civilization is developing so rapidly, when humanity is going through numerous crises, it is important that an individual should preserve his or her integrity, inner wholeness and capability to take challenges of the modern life in a way that these challenges should not destroy his or her personality, not destroy the fundamental principles of the existence of human society.

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