His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia



On 6 December 2017, at the Patriarchal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

Accompanying Metropolitan Rastislav were Archbishop Michal of Prague, Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky) – representative of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Archdeacon Maxim (Durila).

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Paramon of Bronnitsy; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Nikolai Lischenyuk, representative of the

Russian Orthodox Church to the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia; and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations.

Prior to the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said a moleben in the domestic church and cordially greeted His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav, saying in particular, “I have warm recollections of our meeting that took place a year ago, during the celebrations that marked my 70th birthday. And this time you have again kindly confirmed your love for the Russian Orthodox Church by accepting my invitation to attend the celebrations on the occasion of an important historical date – the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Orthodox Church and of the enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon. I hope that you, brothers, will have good impressions of this visit to Moscow.”

As His Holiness noted, the restoration of the Patriarchate was an event of utmost importance in the contemporary history of the Russian Orthodox Church: the Local Council of 1917-1918 took an epoch-making decision to restore after two centuries the traditional canonical order of the Russian Church and elected St. Tikhon to the Patriarchal Throne.

At the request of His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav, the Primate of the Russian Church presented to the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia a reliquary with a particle of the relics of the Holy Righteous Alexis (Mechev) of Moscow. “May this shrine spiritually support your God-loving flock, helping them to lead a worthy Christian life in today’s world,” His Holiness said.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the precious gift and emphasized that the participation in the celebrations marking the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Church was a significant event for the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

“You know very well the recent period in the history of our Church,” His Beatitude said, “We are not only the youngest, but also the smallest among the Orthodox Churches. However, despite our fewness, we have had rather difficult moments in our church life. And at these moments we always find you praying for our Local Church. Allow me on this day to express my personal gratitude and appreciation of the plenitude of our Local Church. We ask for your holy prayers and hope that the Lord will preserve you for many years in good health so that you might govern the Russian Orthodox Church.”

During the meeting Patriarch Kirill raised various issues, including the situation in Ukraine and persecution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. “Force is being used to seize churches, people are being beaten up. We win court cases, but the court decisions are not implemented, because groups of militants occupy churches and do not let bailiffs come in; and the local authorities are afraid of them.”

“The government is unable to implement even its own courts’ decisions,” His Holiness continued, “Sometimes our faithful, deprived of the opportunity to worship in the church that they built begin to construct a new one. There have been built several such new churches. The support of all the Orthodox Churches is the only thing that warms the cockles of the heart of our believers, as well as the consistent and strict adherence to the canonical rule which excludes any unilateral, politically motivated proclamation of any autocephaly. For if there will be any autocephaly proclaimed illegally, it will make the situation even worse and will tear apart the Orthodox body of Ukraine even more badly.”

As Patriarch Kirill emphasized, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church that has the majority of parishes, enjoys immense support among people. “However, certain political forces want to legislatively change its name, deprive our Church of its historical name – ‘Ukrainian Orthodox Church,’ by associating it with Russia, which they call aggressor county,” His Holiness added.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill mentioned the bills submitted to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which are aimed at legalizing the seizure of churches and discrimination against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and thanked Metropolitan Rastislav for his position of disapproval expressed earlier.

“They have taken a break at the Rada; yet, we do not know how it will end,” Patriarch Kirill said, expressing his concern, “Therefore I would ask you to remain vigilant and react in any possible ways, for it is only the public opinion, including the opinion expressed in the European Union, that will have an effect on those who try to destroy our Church.”

Discussed during the meeting were also inter-Orthodox relations and student exchange between the Russian Church and the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

DECR Communication Service

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