



## **Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church meets with His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia**



On 6 December 2017, at the Patriarchal and Synodal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia was accompanied by Bishop Irinej of Bačka, Bishop Antonije of Moravica – representative of the Serbian Patriarch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Archimandrite Isihije (Rogič), and Archimandrite Stefan (Šarič).

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Andrei of Rossosh and Ostrogozhsk; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Vitaly Tarasyev, rector of the Russian Orthodox Church's Representation in Belgrade; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR

secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; and Mr. Andrei Khoshev, DECR staff member.

Prior to the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said a moleben in the church of the residence and cordially greeted His Holiness Patriarch Irinej who had arrived in Moscow to attend the celebrations marking the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russian Orthodox Church and the election of St. Tikhon to the Patriarchal Throne.

“As you know, the restoration of the Patriarchate was a significant event in the contemporary history of the Russian Orthodox Church,” Patriarch Kirill said, “Among those who participated in the Local Council that took the epoch-making decision to restore the traditional canonical order was a representative of the sister Serbian Church – Archimandrite Michael (Urošević). At one of the Council’s sessions he greeted Patriarch Tikhon, enthroned not long before that, on behalf of Metropolitan Dimitije of Serbia. Besides, Fr. Michael took part in the discussion of the Council’s documents, proposing amendments, that is he officially participated in the work of the Council.”

“Your current visit and participation in the celebrations are a vivid continuation of the centuries-old tradition of relationships between our Churches and the peoples they guide, which is based on love and like-mindedness manifested with such clarity a hundred years ago at the All-Russian Local Council,” His Holiness added.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also noted that in 2020 the Holy Serbian Orthodox Church would have a similar jubilee – the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate. “In the run-up of this jubilee we will lift up our fervent prayers for the unity and prosperity of the Serbian Orthodox Church. And we will particularly pray for peace and just settlement of the issues pertaining to the future of Kosovo and Metohija. May the Lord help the Serbian people preserve their national church unity and may He strengthen our fraternal ties to His glory and in the name of the honour and dignity of the Universal Orthodoxy,” Patriarch Kirill said.

His Holiness Patriarch Irinej thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for the invitation to take part in the celebrations, saying in particular, “This jubilee is important not only to the Russian Church, but to the whole Orthodox world as well, for, gathering here, we can talk and discuss the most important issues of church life.”

“I thank Your Holiness for closely monitoring the situation in Kosovo and Metohija,” Patriarch Irinej continued, “You visited Kosovo and Metohija on various occasions and had an opportunity to learn about all the ordeals and problems that our people have to endure. Our government is consistently struggling to keep this land as part of Serbia. This land is being taken away from Serbia unjustly. Our resources are scarce and therefore we need the assistance of the fraternal Russia and the assistance of

the Russian Orthodox Church headed by you.”

The Primate of the Serbian Church also expressed his profound gratitude to the Russian Church for her contribution to the restoration of the Cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade. The discussion of this topic continued during the meeting of the Primates.

“The dome has already been restored. The mosaic depicting the Ascension of the Lord is a feast for the city of Belgrade, it is a very symbolic mosaic. We hope that it will be a token of the Serbian-Russian friendship,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, “As you know, Russia, through no fault of its own, has found itself in a difficult economic situation. However, despite these strained circumstances, we believe that the adornment of the Cathedral of St. Sava is our common mission. Throughout history, our peoples have been together; they have never fought against each other, but always fought together against their enemies, upholding the unity of Orthodoxy. And in some respect this church is to be a monument to this remarkable historical brotherly cooperation of the two countries, two peoples, two Churches.”

His Holiness noted a special role of the Representation of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Moscow, whose rector is Bishop Antonije of Moravica, in promoting inter-Orthodox dialogue.

The participants in the meeting also discussed other issues of cooperation between the two Churches, including student exchange.

“Student exchange is a very important factor for strengthening our relations,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, “Nowadays there have emerged new favourable circumstances, because the curricula of the St. Petersburg and Moscow Theological Academies and other seminaries have received state accreditation, and now our educational institutions award diplomas recognized by the Russian state. The Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies, headed by Metropolitan Hilarion, has the dissertation council that has a right to consider candidate and doctoral theses recognized by the state.”

“We are also interested in sending our students to your university for studying the Serbian language, Serbian culture, contemporary Serbian theology and for learning more about the life of the Serbian Orthodox Church,” the Primate of the Russian Church added.

*DECR Communication Service*