



## **Primates of Russian and Polish Orthodox Churches meet in Moscow**

On 5 December 2017, at the Patriarchal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland.

The delegation accompanying His Beatitude Sawa includes Archbishop Grerory of Bielsk, Archpriest Doroteusz Sawicki, and Mr. Mikołaj Podolec.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Seraphim of Lyubertsy, chairman of the Synodal Youth Department; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations, and Mr. Yevgeny Bakhtin, DECR staff member.

Prior to the meeting, His Holiness said a moleben at the domestic Chapel of All the Russian Saints and greeted the high guest, saying in particular:

"I am glad to see you in good health in Moscow, together with the episcopate, members of the Church and all those who regard the centenary of St. Tikhon's enthronement as the greatest event in the contemporary church history. I am also glad that from time to time I have an opportunity to meet with you and in a fraternal manner openly discuss the issues that concern the Orthodox Churches today."

As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted, the Orthodox Christians in Russia take great interest in the Polish Orthodox Church. For instance, in summer 2017, a photo exhibition entitled "Colours of Orthodoxy. Poland," dedicated to the shrines of the Polish Orthodox Church and activities of her clergy and laypeople, was successfully held at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, as well as in St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, and Irkutsk.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also emphasized a special importance of the Local Council of 1917-1918 – a milestone in the common history of the Polish and Russian Orthodox Churches. "A whole number of clerics and laypeople of the Russian Orthodox Church who later joined the Polish Orthodox Church, were active participants in the Council which focused, among other issues,

on the religious situation in Poland,” Patriarch Kirill said.

As His Holiness reminded all those present, Patriarch Tikhon, elected to the Patriarchal Throne in 1917, began his pastoral ministry in Poland. Since 1892, the future First Hierarch was an inspector and then rector of the Chełm Theological Seminary. He headed the school council of the diocese of Chełm and Warsaw, and in 1897 was consecrated as Bishop of Lublin, vicar of the diocese of Chełm and Warsaw.

“Therefore I particularly appreciate the participation of Your Beatitude and the delegation of the Polish Orthodox Church in the celebrations marking the centenary of the opening of the All-Russian Local Council, as well as of the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Orthodox Church and the election of St. Tikhon to the All-Russian Patriarchal Throne,” the Primate of the Russian Church said.

The Primate of the Polish Orthodox Church cordially thanked Patriarch Kirill for the invitation to attend the celebrations and for the greeting, wishing to His Holiness and to the whole Russian Church the Lord’s blessing through the prayers of St. Tikhon, so that the Church might develop, grow stronger and expand.

During the meeting with His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill raised various issues, including the student exchange between theological schools of the Russian and the Polish Orthodox Churches and youth work.

“We will welcome if someone from the Polish Orthodox Church will want to study and receive subsidies at our educational institutions. It can bring nothing but benefits, I believe,” Patriarch Kirill said.

“Youth work is also of interest to us. I remember what positive impression I had of my visit to Grabarka and meeting with your young people,” His Holiness added.

During the meeting, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also noted the intensification of church activities almost in all countries in the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate. As His Holiness said, in Moscow a programme of building churches is being implemented now.

“We open almost 1500 churches a year,” Patriarch Kirill said, “Yet, these are less than 1500 parishes. However, it is the parish life and contacts with the community and the flock what forms religious beliefs in people, reforming them and helping them in their life. Therefore, when talking about the construction of new churches, we mean not only the construction of new buildings, but the creation of new parishes. At present there are already 500 full-fledged parishes in Moscow. When I began my service, there were 290.”

The Primate of the Polish Orthodox Church expressed his interest in promoting cooperation between the two Churches. As he mentioned, the Polish Orthodox Church annually organizes the Paschal pilgrimage for young people. His Beatitude invited young people from Russia to take part in the pilgrimage next May.

*DECR Communication Service*

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