



Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church meets with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania



On 5 December 2017, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania at the Patriarchal residence located in St. Daniel's stavropegic monastery.

The delegation, which accompanies him on his visit to Moscow to attend festivities held on the occasion of the centenary of the restoration of the Office of Patriarch in the Russian Orthodox Church, includes Metropolitan Metropolitan Joan of Korca, Metropolitan Nathaniel of Amantia, and Deacon Spyridon of Topanxha.

Taking part in the meeting on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Bishop Flavian of Cherepovets and Belozersk; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy

chairman; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; and hierodeacon Grigory (Sokolov), a DECR staff member.

Primates of the Albanian and Russian Orthodox Churches said prayer in the domestic church dedicated to all saints of the Russian Church.

Addressing the high guest, His Holiness reminded him of his last visit to the capital of Russia in November 2016 to attend celebration of the 70th birthday of the Primate of the Russian Church. "I am deeply moved with your response to my invitation to take part in the festivities dedicated to the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Orthodox Church," Patriarch Kirill said.

He noted that the restoration of the Patriarchate was a most important decision taken by the All-Russian Church Council in 1917: "The election of Patriarch, the first after the two-hundred-year rupture, has consolidated our Church. St. Tikhon inspired people to the feat of confession by his own example. It is difficult to say what could have happened with our Church if the Council had not take place."

His Holiness expressed his joy over the presence of Archbishop Anastasios at the final session of Bishops' Council that took place on November 29-December 2 and his address.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church highly appreciated the role played by His Beatitude Anastasios in the bringing back to life of the Albanian Orthodox Church, which was totally destroyed during the time of atheistic dictatorship. "We see the Albanian Church as a confessor church. The persecution against religion in Albania were barbarous and total as nowhere in the world, but the Albanian Church has come alive thus bringing witness to the power of God.

"We understand the events in Albania in the 20th century only too well, as the Russian Orthodox Church had experiences tribulations, and we are happy to see the success of the Albanian Orthodox Church and beseech God to bless our labours. "

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed grave concern over the recent harassment of Orthodox Christians in Albania: "There were announcements of making monasteries and churches archeological monuments with fee for entrance. We consider it a pressure upon the Orthodox Church, condemn withdrawal of ecclesiastical holy objects and valuables from Orthodox churches and believe that international human rights organizations should pay close attention to this problem.

"When our churches were closed and holy objects were taken away from them, many people did not believe in the rebirth of the Orthodox Church, but we are here now. Therefore I greet You and your delegation with a special feeling. May the Lord keep you and grant you spiritual and bodily strength,

many years of creative life and the joy to see results of your apostolic labours.”

His Beatitude Anastasios expressed profound gratitude to the Russian Orthodox Church on behalf of the Albanian Church and said that during his first visit to Russia in 1976 he could not dream that the Lord would grant him an opportunity to be here on this radiant day.

During the talk of the Primates His Holiness Kirill raised the issue of student exchange, saying that theology was accepted as an academic discipline. “Besides dozens of theological schools there function many theological chairs and departments at the secular institutions of higher education, so thousands of young people study theology and many well-known outstanding scholars teach them. I would like to add that we are willing to receive students from the Albanian Church if You consider it helpful,” he said.

Patriarch Kirill highly appreciated the work of His Beatitude in the field of theology, saying that his name is well known in the Russian Church also thanks to his academic publications. “We would like to publish your last book in Russian in our country,” he added.

Discussed at the talk were inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian relations and the situation of Orthodoxy in Ukraine.

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