His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch

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 Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East.

The delegation accompanying the Patriarch of Antioch includes Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Basilios of Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines, Archimandrite Parthenios (Allati), Archdeacon Gerasimos (Kabbas), Mr. Georges Ghandour, Mr. Georges Nahas, Mr. Hassan Risheh, Mr. Husam Salibi, and Ms. Lea Adel.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Hegumen Arseny (Sokolov),

representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East; and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-orthodox relations.

Before the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said a moleben at the residence chapel and greeted the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and all those present, saying in particular:

“We are glad that at this difficult time, especially for the Orthodox Church of Antioch, our relations have become even more dynamic than in the recent past. Our cooperation today is aimed at healing the wounds inflicted to the pious Orthodox Syrian people, as well as the wounds of other Orthodox Christians suffering greatly at the hands of terrorists.”

His Beatitude Patriarch John said in response, “I thank God the Lord that our delegation and I have had the opportunity to attend the celebrations marking the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Church.”

Patriarch John thanked the Russian Orthodox Church for the support that she renders to the Church of Antioch, which is experiencing great difficulties these days. “We appreciate the humanitarian aid that the Russian Federation sends to our brothers in Syria,” the Primate of the Church of Antioch said.

During the meeting that followed His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said in particular:

“The event, the centenary of which we are celebrating, changed the course of history of the Russian Orthodox Church: at, perhaps, the hardest moment of our national history, the miracle of the restoration of the Patriarchal ministry occured.”

“The persecutions that the Russian Church had endured made us sensitive to the sufferings of our brothers and sisters, wherever they are,” His Holiness added and expressed profound condolences to His Beatitude John and all the Syrian people, Christians in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, as well as to all those who are under the omophorion of the Primate of the Church of Antioch, over the death and suffering of people who for the name of Christ had been killed or driven away from their native lands.

As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia reminded all those present, during the meeting of the Primates and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, which took place in Moscow four years ago, all the Primates were unanimous in asking the head of the Russian state to defend Christians in the Middle East. “You know that Russia has interfered in a very serious and dangerous conflict in Syria at the request of this country’s legitimate government. Of course, it was very important to destroy terrorism, which threatens not only Syria, but the entire Middle East and other countries, including Russia. However, the Russian President has

always remembered about the unanimous request made to Russia by the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches to physically defend Christians in the Middle East," His Holiness continued, "As is known, almost the entire territory of Syria has been liberated due to the actions of, among others, the Russian armed forces… Pinning our hopes on God, we are waiting for the soonest cessation of the war and the soonest return of people to their homes."

"Today the Russian Orthodox Church strives to do all she can to help those who have suffered in the hardest conflict, by the presence of terrorists in the territory of Syria," Patriarch Kirill said. He reminded those present about the fundraising campaigns organized at the Russian churches with the view of rendering humanitarian aid to the population of Syria affected by the armed conflict.

For instance, the aid was delivered to the needy families and pupils of Sunday schools in Mahardah, Marmarita, Maaloula and Latakia. This May the Patriarchal Al-Hosn Hospital received over two tonnes of medical equipment, including refrigeration equipment and medical supplies, His Holiness noted.

As the Primate of the Russian Church pointed out, in rendering humanitarian aid to the population of this region, the Church actively cooperates with the governmental and non-governmental institutions.

His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for the invitation to attend the Moscow celebrations, as well as for particular attention devoted to the delegation of the Church of Antioch and for the solidarity with those who had endured great suffering.

His Beatitude also emphasized the significance of the meeting with the head of the Russian state that had taken place the day before, noting that it was important for all the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches to meet with the President of Russia, for that meeting was yet another manifestation of the aid and support which Russia renders to Christians in different countries. "We have also noted that His Excellency the President pays much attention to the situation of Christians in the entire Middle East, including Syria and Lebanon," Patriarch John added.

The Primate of the Church of Antioch also expressed his gratitude for the organization of his separate meeting with the head of the Russian state, during which they discussed the issues of providing aid to the Christians facing very hard problems.

His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church and her Primate aimed at rendering assistance to the Christians in Syria.

The participants in the meeting also discussed various issues of bilateral and pan-Orthodox

cooperation.

DECR Communication Service

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