His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem



On 2 December 2017, in the Red Hall of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos of Jerusalem.

Accompanying the high guest were Archbishop Aristarchos of Constantina, Archbishop Theophylaktos of Jordan, Archimandrite Stephan (Dispirakis), representative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Archdeacon Mark (Henderson).

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, administrator of the diocese of Vienna, Austria and Hungary; Bishop Antony of Zvenigorod, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; and Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations.

The participants in the meeting discussed various issues, including the situation in the Holy Land and the Middle East. As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted, the Russian Church highly appreciates the efforts of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem aimed at preserving the shrines of the Holy Land. “It is difficult to imagine what would have happened to the holy sites had the brotherhood of Jerusalem not defended the Orthodox shrines for centuries,” the Primate of the Russian Church said, “I do not know if even stones would have remained, not to mention the shrines. That is why we greatly appreciate your mission, which is very difficult and requires courage, wisdom and ability to defend yourself.”

The protection of the Christian holy places was historically of utmost importance to Russia, Patriarch Kirill emphasized, saying, “It was while defending the holy places that Russia in the 19th century, under Emperor Nicholas I, came into conflict with the unified Europe: all this force was used against the Russian city of Sevastopol, the Crimea, Russia, in order to prevent Russia from protecting the holy sites and from even thinking about its presence in the Middle East. However, by God’ mercy, these goals were not achieved. I believe that today when Russia is no longer ruled by the atheistic government, it can play a significant role in, among other things, defending the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the status of the holy places. And the fact that thousands and thousands of pilgrims from Russia and Ukraine visit these places is also a clear sign of support for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.”

As His Holiness pointed out, the bilateral relations between the Orthodox Churches of Russia and Jerusalem have intensified over the years of Primatial service of His Beatitude Theophilos.

The participants in the meeting also discussed the plight of Christians in the Middle East. “This dangerous political situation is so close to the holy places, to Jerusalem, that it cannot leave us indifferent. It relates, for instance, to the safety of the holy sites,” the Primate of the Russian Church said, “It is difficult to imagine what would have happened in the Middle East, had the terrorists taken power in Syria.”

“Today, by God’s mercy, the hostilities in Syria have almost come to an end and the ISIS is almost defeated,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill continued, “Of course, now it will be a very important stage of the restoration of Syria, when the issues pertaining to its political future will be tackled. It is our great hope that the political settlement will help re-establish lasting peace in the Middle East and, therefore, ensure the safety of the holy places.”

The Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church that completed its work on 2 December 2017, was of great significance with regard to the understanding of the situation in Ukraine and of the strength and unity of the Russian Church, Patriarch Kirill noted. He thanked His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos for expressing support to the canonical Church in Ukraine and asked for his prayers for the cessation of

tribulations in Ukraine and for the strengthening of the unity of the Russian Church.

“Of course, our Church is in a difficult situation, as it is being called the Church of an aggressor country. Several discriminatory bills were submitted to the Rada, aimed against our Church,” His Holiness added and noted that one of the bills stipulated special control by the government over all staff-related decisions in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Such things did not happened even in the Soviet Union.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos emphasized the importance of the unity of the Church, assured of his unwavering support for the canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine, and wished patience to the Orthodox Christians in this country.

The Primate of the Church of Jerusalem also told His Holiness Patriarch Kirill about the current situation in the Holy Land, for instance, about the restoration works at the Church of the Holy Resurrection in Jerusalem and at other holy sites, expressing particular gratitude to Russia for its support.

Patriarch Theophilos also expressed his appreciation for the role of Russia in combating terrorism in Syria. “Had it not been for the interference of Russia and President Putin personally, there would have been no more Christians in the Middle East, for the Christians of Syria and Lebanon, including the Orthodox Christians, were the target for terrorists, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem noted. “We are grateful to President Vladimir Putin who defends Christianity and Orthodoxy in particular,” His Beatitude added.

DECR Communication Service

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