



Patriarch Kirill visits church of Archangel Michael in Bukhara

October 2, 2017 – His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who is on a primatial visit to the Diocese of Tashkent of the Metropolia of Central Asia, arrived in Bukhara.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and his party of church high officials were met at the airport by Uzbekistan Presidential counsellor of state R. Kamilov, chairman of the Uzbekistan government committee for religious affairs A. Yusipov, deputy foreign minister S. Niyazjaev, Russian ambassador to Uzbekistan V. Tyurdenev, chairman of the Uzbekistan Muslim Board Mufti Usmonkhon Alimov, and Bukhara governor U. Barnoev.

From the airport Patriarch Kirill proceeded to the church of Archangel Michael in Bukhara, where he was met by its rector Father Leonid Petrov, the clergy and numerous faithful. Father Leonid welcomed His Holiness in the church and presented him with a souvenir made by Bukhara craftsmen.

Then the primate, bishops and priests came out to the church porch to be greeted by Metropolitan Vikentiy of Tashkent and Uzbekistan, head of the Metropolia of Central Asia.

Patriarch Kirill addressed the faithful from the church-porch. He spoke about his delight at seeing the Orthodox flock in Bukhara, a city that has a special importance for people who confess Islam. 'I rejoice seeing your radiant faces reflecting your faith, your hope and love'.

His Holiness spoke about the religiosity of the Russian people. 'It is very important that the religiosity of our people, including those who live outside Russia, should not come from the tradition alone –they say, if you are Russian you should be Orthodox. Many of those who claim to be Orthodox come to church very rarely and the faith for them is on the periphery of their thoughts. We should be active in our confession of the faith. It is expressed in our church attendance and daily prayer. Religiosity must be alive'.

He also spoke about the need for parents to give their children the knowledge of the faith and instill in them the ways of religious life so that they may preserve them when entering adult life.

Speaking about the Muslim environment, His Holiness said, 'You live amidst the Muslim majority.

Bukhara is a special city. There is a madrasah known throughout the world, in which outstanding leaders of the Islamic world studied and now occupy high posts in the Islamic ummah. It is very important that our relations with people of Islamic faith should be always good and peaceful. And how is peace established among people? If we do not harm people we can expect a good attitude to us. Good relations between people of different religions, Christianity and Islam, are an essential guarantee of social wellbeing'.

The city of Bukhara has been an important religious and cultural center of the Muslim world since the late middle ages. In the period from 1873 to 1920, when the Bukhara Emirate was Russia's protectorate, Russian workers, mostly railwaymen, and Russian settlers used to live in 'New Bukhara', now Kagan. In this city, an Orthodox church dedicated to St. Alexander Nevsky was arranged. It has not survived.

The church of Archangel Michael was laid in March 1875. Its construction was completed in November 1875. It was closed in 1929.

After the 1920 coup'etat and Emir Said Alimckhan escape to Afghanistan, the ban on the settlement of Christians in Bukhara was lifted, but due to the policy of state atheism, it was impossible to register an Orthodox parish.

It was only after Uzbekistan became independent in 1992 that it became possible to register an Orthodox parish, but parishioners had to assemble for worship in maladjusted facilities.

In 1994, the Bukhara regional council gave the Orthodox parish a part of the railway station which was not used, and in 1997 the parish received the whole compound in which a proper church was arranged.

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