



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill arrives in Uzbekistan

On 29 September 2017, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia began his Primatial visit to the diocese of Tashkent of the Central Asia metropolitan area (Republic of Uzbekistan).

Meeting the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Tashkent airport were Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan; Mr. Vladimir Tyurdenev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Uzbekistan; Mr. R.T. Kamilov, State Advisor to the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Mr. Ortiqbek Yusupov, chairman of the Committee on Religious Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Mr. Saidikram Niyazkhodjaev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan; and the clergy of the Tashkent diocese.

The delegation accompanying His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on his visit to Uzbekistan includes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; and Mr. Vladimir Legoyda, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society and Mass Media Relations.

Addressing representatives of the mass media at the Tashkent airport, His Holiness said:

"I am glad to set foot on the land of Uzbekistan. I was here on numerous occasions, and not only in Tashkent. I cherish the warmest recollections of my meetings with the Muslims of Uzbekistan, with common people, with representatives of intelligentsia. And this new meeting will, undoubtedly, be of great importance for me. I have already heard much about the big changes taking place in your country lately, how Tashkent has changed... I would like to see with my own eyes what your people have achieved and to learn more about the centuries-old Uzbekistan's history which is a very significant factor for the formation of national identity of your people.

"I would also like to emphasize that with regard to the number of adherents, Orthodoxy is the second largest religion after Islam in Uzbekistan. The flock of the Russian Orthodox Church consists of not only the Russians, but also Belarusians, Ukrainians and representatives of other peoples confessing Orthodoxy. I am glad that the relationships between the Islam and the Orthodox Church are so good here and, perhaps, even more constructive today than when I visited Uzbekistan. It seems to me that our peoples have much in common: we lived in one country, we fought against the common enemy, our

fathers and grandfathers died, defending our common country from the terrible foe – fascism.

“Now we live in different countries. Yet, ties between us remain strong. I remember reading once that many Russian people would come to Uzbekistan to help improve its economy and industry, to build roads and develop other important economic entities. Today great many citizens of Uzbekistan are working in Russia. And the fact that there was in the past and there is still such exchange of people is a pledge that the relations between our peoples and our countries will always be good, because we must not ignore those good things that belong to the past and that can still bear much fruit.

“I would like to wish prosperity to the people of Uzbekistan and am pleased to have an opportunity to meet with Mr. President, with the Islamic leaders of Uzbekistan, to visit the Orthodox churches, celebrate divine services, and to see, apart from Tashkent, such amazing cities as Samarkand and Bukhara.

“It is with warm, good feelings that I begin my visit to the blessed Uzbekistan and once again greet all of you.”

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill left the airport for the Convent of the Holy Trinity and St. Nicholas in Tashkent.

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