



Patriarch Kirill meets Armenian ambassador to Russia

On July 5, 2017, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met Armenia's newly assigned ambassador to Russia, Mr. Vardan S. Torganian, at the patriarchal and synodal residence in the St. Daniel monastery.

Present at the meeting were also Bishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania, administrator of the Patriarchal Deanery of the Russian Orthodox Church's parishes in the Republic of Armenia, and Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations.

His Holiness cordially greeted his guest congratulating him on his assignment as Armenian ambassador to Russia. He noted that Mr. Torganian's experience of communication with various sections of the Russian public would help him in his diplomatic work on his new post to develop further the Russian-Armenian relations.

'We see Armenia as a fraternal country with a fraternal people close to us in faith, mentality and history. Along with her remarkable history and cultural tradition, Armenia is also a country with beautiful architectural monuments and a special natural landscape and in this sense she is a unique place in Transcaucasia', he said.

His Holiness also stated that the close attitudes of the two countries to various foreign policy issues created an important platform for interaction both in the economic and cultural spheres, adding, 'I cannot help mentioning the role of our Churches, which are very close to each other both in the experience of spiritual life and history. It forms value foundations including political relations, which, to my mind, is the most important thing, because in the absence of a value foundation, policy becomes very dependent on a current situation: what is beneficial today will cease to be beneficial tomorrow; what encourages to cooperation today goes away from life tomorrow, and the cooperation breaks apart. But when there is a value foundation – and our foundation is Christian morality – Churches stand guard over the preservation of this foundation of the people's life. Therefore, I give a great importance to the development of relations with the Armenian Apostolic Church'.

His Holiness mentioned his numerous visits to Armenia, pointing out their importance for the development of bilateral relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Apostolic

Church. The latest visit, which took place in 2011, was for the trilateral peacemaking meeting of religious leaders of Russia and Transcaucasia. Devoted to the settlement of the situation in Nagorno Karabakh, the meeting was attended by Patriarch Kirill, Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshuqur Pasha-zade, chairman of the Caucasus Muslim Board, and the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II.

'I believe this initiative should be continued, and in September we are going to conduct another round. It is my deep conviction that the contribution of religious leaders and religions in the process of settling the Karabakh conflict is very important because our message is addressed to both people's awareness and their hearts. I have mentioned the community of values, and such political processes as settlement of conflicts should also be founded on a certain spiritual intransient community. I believe our relations in the way of discussing the Karabakh problem together with Muslim brothers constitute a very important factor and we will do all that is possible to develop this policy to reach an ultimate solution acceptable for the both sides', His Holiness said.

In Armenia, there are thousands of Orthodox believers, His Holiness noted in the course of the talk. Since last December, the Moscow Patriarchate parishes in Armenia have been united in a Patriarchal Deanery, with Bishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania charged with administration over it.

In addition, active cooperation has been established with the Armenian Apostolic Church's diocese of Russia and Novo-Nakhichevan. In 2017, the diocese will celebrate its 300th anniversary. 'This diocese feels quite well in Russia as churches are being built and church life is developing. We believe the pastoral care of the Armenians in the Russian territory to be an important task as well and try to help in all possible ways', Patriarch Kirill noted.

The ambassador of Armenia to Russia, in his turn, stressed the importance of fraternal relations between the two Churches and significance in this respect of the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Armenian Apostolic Church's diocese of Russia and Novo-Nakhichevan.

Mr. Vardan Toganian gave a high value to the efforts of the Russian Orthodox Church and personally His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the spiritual revival of the Russian people and pointed to the topicality of initiatives for the settlement of the Karabakh problem.

In conclusion of the talk, the sides exchanged tokens of the meeting.

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