



## **Award of the Department for External Church Relations is presented to Archbishop Alexander of Baku and Azerbaijan**



Archbishop Alexander of Baku and Azerbaijan was awarded the Medal of St. Mark of Ephesus, 1st Class. With the blessing of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman, handed over the award to Archbishop Alexander at the Cathedral of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Baku after the Divine Liturgy on June 25, 2017.

The administrator of the Baku diocese was honoured with this medal in consideration of his significant contribution to the promotion and strengthening of interreligious dialogue, the cooperation with the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Caucasus, the assistance for the Department for External Church Relations in its contacts with Sheikh ul-Islam Pashazade, and the support for the Russian compatriots living in Azerbaijan.

The presentation of the Medal of St. Mark of Ephesus was timed to the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Archbishop Alexander of Baku and Azerbaijan.

As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia noted in his message of greetings, Vladyka Alexander has spent many years of his life serving in the Caucasus and the Transcaucasia region. "This ministry requires special tact and diplomatic skills, for it is carried out in the land where representatives of different religions and nationalities live side by side," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church emphasizes in his letter.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, also sent a message of greetings to Archbishop Alexander.

"Combining in your work wisdom and simplicity, you confidently steer the church vessel on the waves of the wordly sea, often great and dangerous," the message states in particular, "The Orthodox Christians living in the diocese that you head have become an organic part of the multi-ethnic family of the peoples of Azerbaijan. No conflicts arise among them, owing to a large extent to the fact that the Orthodox clergymen, as well as representatives of other religions, continuously call upon their faithful to keep peace, as commanded by the Maker."

Archbishop Alexander conveyed his gratitude to Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, saying in particular, "All the years of my service in the Caucasus I have been closely cooperating with the Department for External Church Relations in various spheres, including the interfaith dialogue, which is an important instrument for building up lasting and just peace among people. I hope that our joint work will continue successfully for the good of the Russian Orthodox Church and its flock in Azerbaijan."

*DECR Communication Service*

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