



Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk visits the Philippines



On 17-19 June 2017, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, administrator of the Moscow Patriarchate's parishes in the East and Southeast Asia, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat, paid an archpastoral visit to the Philippines. The archpastor was accompanied by Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a staff member of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Mr. Nikolai Sokolov, assistant to the head of the Administrative Secretariat.

On June 17, upon his arrival in the capital of the Philippines, Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk met with the Catholic Archbishop of Manila, Cardinal Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle, and conveyed to him greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who visited Manila in his capacity as chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations back in 2002 and

met with Cardinal Jaime Sin. Archbishop Sergiy and Cardinal Tagle noted the historic importance of the meeting between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Pope Francis which took place in Havana on February 12, 2016. Cardinal Tagle welcomed the renewal of historical presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Philippines with the view of taking pastoral care of the Russian compatriots, and expressed his wish to visit Russia.

Taking part in the meeting were also Mr. Igor Khovaev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of the Philippines; Hieromonk Alexy (Lapshin); Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a staff member of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Mr. D.M. Karenin, Second Secretary of Russia's Embassy in Manila; and Mr. Nikolai Sokolov, assistant to the head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat.

The same day in the evening Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk visited the Chapel of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God and celebrated the All-Night Vigil there.

On June 18, the commemoration day of All the Saints Who Shone Forth in the Russian Land, Archbishop Sergiy officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the Iveron Chapel in Manila. Concelebrating with the archpastor were Hieromonk Alexy (Lapshin), rector of the chapel, cleric of the Shuya diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church; Hieromonk Pitirim (Dodenko), senior priest of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Holy Dormition in Singapore; Rev. Georgy Maksimov, cleric of the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Businovo, Moscow; Hieromonk Philip (Balingit), administrator of the Philippine Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia; and Rev. Silouan Thompson, a cleric of the Philippine Mission.

Addressing the worshippers with a homily after the divine service, Archbishop Sergiy greeted all those present with the commemoration day of the All Russian Saints and noted that the Orthodox Church sees holiness as an active fulfillment of God's commandment of love – the true love in Christ.

On June 19, Archbishop Sergiy met with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines, Mr. Alan Peter Cayetano, to discuss the humanitarian aspects of relationships between Russia and the Philippines. Mr. Cayetano conveyed to the Russian hierarch greetings from the President of the Philippines, Mr. Rodrigo Duterte. On behalf of the Russian Church, Archbishop Sergiy expressed deep concern over the unstable situation on the Island of Mindanao and emphasized that the Russian Orthodox Christians living in the Philippines pray for the soonest cessation of the armed conflict and for the restoration of peace on Mindanao.

The head of the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines expressed his support to the intention to renew the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in the country. He promised to render the

necessary assistance in reviving the activities of the Iveron Church in Manila and support the Russian Orthodox communities in Cebu, Boracay and other cities where the Russian people are residing, as well as on the Island of Mindanao. The participants in the meeting noted that taking in consideration the progress in cooperation between Russia and the Philippines, the religious presence of the Russian Orthodoxy would strengthen humanitarian ties between the two countries and promote mutual understanding between the peoples of Russia and the Philippines.

Among those who also took part in the meeting were Mr. Igor Khovaev, Russia's Ambassador to the Philippines; deputy heads of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defense of the Philippines; leadership of the European Department of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs; Hieromonk Alexy (Lapshin); Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a staff member of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Mr. D.M. Karenin, Second Secretary of Russia's Embassy in Manila; and Mr. Nikolai Sokolov, assistant to the head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat.

In the evening of June, 19, Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk departed for Moscow.

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