His Holiness Patriarch Kirill leads 17th award ceremony of International Public Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations



On 23 May 2017, at the Hall of the Church Councils of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia led the 17th annual ceremony of awarding the Patriarch Alexy II Prize of the Unity of the International Public Foundation for the Orthodox Nations. The prize is granted 'For the Outstanding Activities in Strengthening the Unity of the Orthodox Christian Nations. For Upholding and Promoting Christian Values in the Life of Society.'

The 2016 prize winners were His Holiness Pope and Patriarch Tawadros II of the Coptic Church, Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the Republic of Macedonia, and Mr. Sergei Sobyanin, Mayor of Moscow.

Prior to the ceremony, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill held a meeting with the President of the Republic of Macedonia and the delegation accompanying Mr. Ivanov on his visit to Moscow. The meeting took place at the Red Hall of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

The ceremony was attended by Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of the Great Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Metropolitan Arseny of Istra, Patriarchal first vicar for Moscow; Archbishop Sergy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Bishop Feofilakt of Dmitrov, abbot of the Stavropegic Monastery of St. Andrew in Moscow; Bishop Antony of Bogorodsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad; Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; and Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman.

Among those present were also the Russian government officials, foreign ambassadors, representatives of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, and members of the delegations of Patriarch Tawadros II and Present Gjorge Ivanov.

The guests were shown a documentary telling about the activities of the International Public Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations.

Mr. Valery Alexeyev, president of the foundation, greeted all those present and gave the floor to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed the 2016 prize winners and the guests of the ceremony with a welcome speech.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and Mr. Alexeyev presented the prizes to His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II of the Coptic Church and Mr. Gjorge Ivanov, President of the Republic of Macedonia. Mr. Sergei Sobyanin could not attend the ceremony because he was due to take part in a session of the State Council in Krasnodar under the chairmanship of the Russian President.

His Holiness Patriarch Tawadros II thanked the Primate of the Russian Church and the organizators. In his speech, the head of the Coptic Church noted that the primary task for Christians is to bear witness of love to the world and to pray for the whole world.

The Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov said in his address, "This prize is particularly important and valued for us, since it is awarded for the year 2016. That year we celebrated the anniversary of the passing away of the Holy Clement of Ochrid, Equal-to-the-Apostles, great enlightener of the Slavs, who died eleven centuries ago."

As Mr. Ivanov noted, today Christians, just like in the first centuries, are subjected to severe persecutions; thousands of people have died as martyrs for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Day by day, in the Middle East and North Africa, ISIS carries out genocide of the ancient Christian communities that have been living in these territories for almost two thousand years,” the President of Macedonia said.

“In one of his works St. Clement writes, ‘Let us compete in love, let us uplift our mind through enlightening it with mercy and purity.’ I would like to add that the competition in love may disempower hatred, and the pure and enlightened mind lifted up to heaven may thwart the most dreadful schemes that weight us down. Thus, we build up and develop our societies and states, basing ourselves on the values and principles of St. Clement, with love and mutual respect for the benefit of our peoples and to the glory of the Lord,” Mr. Ivanov said in conclusion.

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