



## **Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church meets with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania**

On 21 November 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania who has arrived in Moscow for celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Taking part in the meeting, which took place at the Patriarchal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery, were also Metropolitan Nathanael of Amantia and Deacon Spyridon Topanxha who accompanied His Beatitude.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Bishop Flavian of Cherepovets and Belozersk; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; Rev. Arseny Chernikin, head of the DECR language service; and Rev. Anatoly Churyakov, a DECR staff member.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill addressed the high guests, saying: "Dear brother, I greet you here, at the residence of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, with a special feeling and express my cordial gratitude to you for attending the celebration of my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. You said today that we have been acquainted for forty-eight years. Being young people in 1968, we took part in the General Assembly of SYNDESMOS, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, which role at that time was important. Since this meeting in Rattvik, Sweden, we often met at various international conferences. So many times when we had an opportunity to cooperate we managed to reach important compromises, particularly in drafting very difficult texts which helped to find common standpoints after hot discussions. Thus we, the Orthodox, have been witnessing our unity. I am grateful to God for our cooperation."

His Holiness highly appreciated the role played by His Beatitude Anastasios in the revival of the Albanian Orthodox Church, which had been completely ruined during the time of atheist dictatorship. "You have exerted tremendous efforts for the Albanian hierarchs and priest to appear, for churches to be built, including the magnificent cathedral in Tirana," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church underscored and continued to say: "I was your guest at the time when the wounds of persecution in Albania had not been healed on the body of the Church and saw your enthusiastic work. Time will never tell on you; your energy and mobility are almost the same as the used to be forty-eight years ago. I wish

you spiritual and physical strength so that you can delight us with your active attitude to life and work for the good of the Church of Albania and of the Orthodox plenitude for many years.”

The Primate of the Albania Church expressed his gratitude for the great gift of friendship granted to us both by God. This friendship is like wine which becomes even better as the time passes. We have been maintaining special friendly relations though I am much older than you. I always felt at home at the meetings of the World Council of Churches and other conferences in which you took part. I was confident as I always knew that we would take common decision. Therefore I keenly felt your absence at the Council on Crete and expressed my regret.

‘The Lord has granted us the greatest miracle of faith thanks to which our Church has been preserved in spite of the harshest persecution. This faith is bearing good fruits,’ His Beatitude Anastasios emphasized and added: “You have rightly noted our hard work in Albania. We were planning our missionary activity and I wrote many books, also about Russian missionaries, including the one about Metropolitan Innocent (Veniaminov). I wanted to write about missionaries and follow their example, and I did it in Albania. Your love has always been a great support to me, and I think that the presence of people in our life is more important than any book.’

His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania presented His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with the hand-made Blessing of the Waters silver cross specially manufactured for the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness presented His Beatitude with liturgical vestments sewed for him, a crozier and a copy of the Patriarch’s collected writings in nine volumes. Metropolitan Nathanael received a crozier and book by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church consented to the proposal of Archbishop Anastasios to translate his Collected Works into the Albanian language for seminarians.