



DECR vice-chairman takes part in press conference on Russian Orthodox Church's service in the world today



On November 16, 2016, a press conference was held in Moscow on 'The Russian Orthodox Church: Service in the Rapidly Changing World'. It was attended by Bishop Panteleimon, head of the synodal department for church charity and social service, B. Legoida, head of the synodal department for the Church's relations with society and mass media, Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), vice-chairman of the department for external church relations, and Rev. Alexander Volkov, head of the press service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

As is known, the Russian Orthodox Church carries out its service in today's world by bearing witness to the Orthodox faith and maintaining cooperation with non-Orthodox and other faith communities in protecting traditional values in face of the challenges coming from the secular world. The Church gives special attention to the charitable work by not only raising funds for those in need or in trouble, but also inspiring people by its own example and calling many not indifferent people to the works of love. A special place in the agenda is given to the problem of persecution of Christians in the Middle East and other regions of the world. The Church's active position on many pressing problems is guided by the

work of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, who marks his 70th birthday this year.

Among the questions mentioned at the press conference was the fate of Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo (Orthodox Church of Antioch) and Metropolitan Gregory John Abraham (Syriac Jacobite Orthodox Church) who were kidnapped in 2013 in Syria. 'The absence of any information about their deaths raises hopes, and this enables us to continue praying and making all possible efforts to help set them free. None of such meetings with church and state or other officials involved in the conflict in the Middle East takes place without raising the subject of their fate. We hope that these efforts will still result in their liberation', Archimandrite Philaret said.

He also spoke about the present state of the Russian Orthodox Church. Having mentioned the centenary of the 1917 October Revolution to be marked next year and the tragic events of the civil war that followed the revolution, as well as the repressions of the 1930s, he stressed that the Church came out of these trials 'not as a museum exhibit or a cultural heritage object but a living organism'.

Archimandrite Philaret recalled that over a half of that tragic period fell on the time of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's life and service. 'He was a witness to the terrible years of repressions which directly affected his family and his life', he pointed out.

Father Alexander Volkov, in his turn, spoke on the program of His Holiness's 70th birthday celebrations. They will be attended by Primates and representatives of the Local Orthodox Church, who will participate in the solemn service at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Savior and discuss pressing problems of inter-church dialogue with His Holiness. The Patriarch will also meet with delegations of the Roman Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church and representatives of the Muslim clergy.

Speaking about the forthcoming celebrations, Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo said that His Holiness called the parishes, instead of giving him flowers, to give their money for social aid. 'Now the funds, which used to be spent on flowers to be later distributed to churches, will be used to buy important equipment for the St. Alexis Hospital', he said.

Mr. Legoida, on his part, informed the journalists that in recent years the mass media showed an increasingly growing interest in the work of the Russian Orthodox Church and the service of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. The informational occasions most noticeable in the media space are His Holiness's sermons devoted to commemorative church dates, the Primate's service linked with the social and international work of the Russian Orthodox Church as well as initiatives directly involved in the life of the Russian society and issues concerning church-state relations, which, as he noted, can be best described at present as 'co-work'.

He noted that the greatest interest in the work of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia was manifested by the mass media last February during the preparations for the meeting and the meeting itself between Patriarch Kirill and Pope Francis of Rome. 'As polls on this topic have shown, a very high proportion of the respondents gave a positive evaluation to the fact of that meeting and its results', he added.

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