Patriarch Kirill visits Royal Geographical Society



On October 16, 2016, His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, during his stay in Great Britain, visited the Royal Geographical Society (RGS).

At the entrance, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was welcomed by Mr. Alasdair Macleod, RGS Head of Enterprise and Resources. His Holiness saw the photographic exhibition devoted to the 300th anniversary of Russian Orthodoxy in Britain and to his archpastoral visitations.

It was planned that after that a ceremony would take place in which His Holiness would be awarded a RGS membership card and would address the solemn meeting devoted to the anniversary, but because of the suddenly triggered fire alarm system all people in the building had to vacate it. His Holiness decided to address the participants and guests of the event outdoors, near the RGS building. In the presence of a multitude of people there, Mr. MacLeod presented Patriarch Kirill with a RGS membership card.

In his address to those present, His Holiness said:

“I will take the liberty not of reading a long paper, which I was going to read, but simply addresing you with some words. I would like to thank you for the honour accorded me to become a member of the Royal Geographical Society. Associated with this society a tremendous achievement in the exploration of the globe and description of seas and oceans. Many of us are familiar with its work, including from fiction written, in particular, by English authors. And the first name that comes to one’s mind is that of David Livingston, who walked 50 thousand kilometers and discovered Africa for the Europeans. He was a devout believer, sincere Christian and he combined his geographical and research work with the preaching of Christ.

The Royal Geographical Society is a very respectful institution in the world. It is one of the most positive ‘faces’ of your people and your country. I would like once again to thank you from my heart for the opportunity to become a member of the Royal Geographical Society. In my life, I have managed to visit 120 countries, with some of them already perished from the face of the earth. I have been to various regions in various times and can compare what happened in a particular country 50 or 40 years ago with what is going on in it today. This knowledge and impressions are very enriching as they help me understand many things happening in the world today.

At the present time, I have a chance to travel a lot through Russia, especially the Far East, the North and Siberia, because a very powerful revival of the Orthodox faith is happening there today. I am always glad to meet local people and smaller nationalities and I should tell you that these people bear a powerful spiritual charge.

They live in a situation in which we cannot live. Recently I have been to Chukotka and visited a family that looks after deer. Upon entering their yaranga, I asked the very amiable woman, the mother of six children (I will mention in parenthesis that all the children were clad in very nice overalls made of deer leather): ‘Does you yaranga leaks?’ She answere, ‘Yes’. ‘And what are you doing then?’ – ‘We simply cover ourselves with a deer skin’. Who of us will give such an answer to such a question if his roof is leaking? Terrible, nightmare, it is impossible to live here! But for these people it is no problem. And I said to them: ‘You are much stronger than we are’. We have much to learn from these people.

As a token of our meeting, I would like to give you a photograph showing me next to penguins in Antarctica. During my journey to Latin America, I had a meeting with the Pope of Rome in Cuba, and the press wrote much about it, of course. But ‘the number one’ in popularity was this picture and my ‘meeting’ with penguins’.

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