



## **Patriarch Kirill prays in the building in London rented from 1813 to 1921 to serve as a Russian church**



On October 15, the first day of his visit to Great Britain devoted to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of the Russian Church on the British Islands, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia presided over a thanksgiving in 32 Welbeck Street in which a ROC church was accommodated from 1813 to 1921.

Among the worshippers were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, and Archbishop Yelisey of Sourozh.

Present at the prayer service were A. Yakovenko, Russian ambassador of Great Britain and other diplomats, as well as compatriots residing in Great Britain and benefactors.

The historic iconostasis of the embassy church, which is kept at the Sourozh diocese's Cathedral of the Dormition, was installed during the prayer service.

After the service, His Holiness Kirill was greeted by Archbishop Yelisey of Sourozh, who said in particular, 'We thank Your Holiness for blessing this place with your prayer. May the Lord bless your first steps on the British soil in your Patriarchal capacity'.

In his response, Patriarch Kirill said:

"Your Eminences and Graces,

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters:

I am very glad that we begin the celebrations devoted to the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in the British land with this place in which the church, which was the center of the Russian Orthodox presence in Great Britain, used to be for over a century. The Lord has repeatedly brought me to the capital of Great Britain, but I have never been to this place. And now I have celebrated here with a great emotion.

Looking at the walls of this facility, I understand that the coming of the Russian Orthodox Church to the British Islands was very modest and almost unnoticeable. This facility shows that the first steps were made by a small community. With gratitude we should remember Archpriests Iakov Smirnov and Yevgeny Popov, who were rectors of the Russian Church's Parish of the Dormition through all the time that Russian people worshiped here.

The prayer service was held here for over 100 years. These walls saw the Emperor Nicholas I, the Emperor Alexander II, the passion-bearing Tsar Nicholas II. Russian monarch, during their visits to London, deemed it their duty to come to this place in which our people worshiped.

After the 1917 revolution, the Russian Orthodox community in London, because of the emigres, grew so much that these walls could no longer accommodate all the faithful. And with gratitude I address the Anglican Church, which offered to our community at a difficult time another, more spacy church.

This place is the cradle of Russian Orthodoxy in Great Britain. I rejoice in the reunification of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, showing the ever-growing number of Orthodox people, who in the 21<sup>st</sup> century believe it necessary to pray together at an Orthodox church in London. In its history, the Orthodox community in London has reflected the hardest history of our country and our Church by having walked a very long and in some sense tragic path.

We have celebrated a thanksgiving, during which we remembered those who were before us and who laid the foundation of the Russian Orthodox Church in London.

I would like to thank you, Your Eminence Yelisey, for your work, especially for the great preparatory work that preceded my visit. I invoke God's blessing upon you, upon the clergy and all our God-saved flock in the British Islands. May the Lord preserve you!

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photos by the Patriarchal Press Service*

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