



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia**



On 26 August 2016, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in St Daniel's Monastery, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, who is paying an official visit to the Russian Orthodox Church.

Representing the Russian Church at the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; archpriest Nikolai Lischenyuk, rector of the Russian Orthodox Church's Representation in Karlovy Vary; and archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR Secretary for Inter-Orthodox Relations.

Among those who took part in the meeting were also members of the delegation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia: Archbishop Michal of Prague; Archbishop Juraj of Michalovce and

Košice; Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), rector of the Representation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in Moscow; Hieromonk Alexander (Halushka), secretary of the Representation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in Moscow; and archdeacon Maxim (Durila), a cleric of the Prešov diocese.

Prior to the meeting, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia said a thanksgiving at the Church of All the Saints Who Shone Forth in the Russian Land. After the prayer service, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greeted Metropolitan Rastislav, saying in particular:

“Your Beatitude, it is not your first visit here. Three years ago you took part in the celebrations marking the 1025<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Russia as the head of the delegation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. I cherish recollections of our meeting and our shared prayers at the great shrines of the largest historical cities of the Holy Rus’: Moscow, Kiev and Minsk. This time you have arrived here in your new capacity as Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

“The establishment of spiritual ties between the people living under the omophorions of our Churches dates back to “the days of old” (Ps 143:5), to the days of the mission of Ss Cyril and Methodius, Equal-to-the-Apostles, whose disciples brought the holy Orthodox faith to Rus’. In enlightening his people, the Holy Prince Vladimir followed an example of the Holy Prince Rastislav of Moravia, Equal-to-the-Apostles.

“The Russian Orthodox Church has always remembered about these bonds, having facilitated the revival of the holy Orthodoxy in the Czech Lands and Slovakia and having laid the foundation of autocephaly of the Czech Orthodox Church 65 years ago. Showing concern for her beloved Daughter, now Sister, the Russian Orthodox Church exerted much effort to ensure the survival of the holy Orthodoxy in the Czech Lands and Slovakia at the time of hardships and ordeals.”

His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav expressed his joy over the opportunity to visit the Russian land in his capacity as Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and cordially thanked His Holiness, saying in particular:

“For the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, the Russian Church has always been the closest of the Local Orthodox Churches. In times of hardships, the Russian Orthodox Church lent a helping hand to us, supporting the holy Orthodoxy in our lands. It was the Russian Church, which herself suffered from persecutions... at the hands of the godless Soviet authorities, that supported the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia, coming into being.

“Many of our clergymen studied or continue to study at theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church. Many of our hierarchs took monastic vows at the Russian monasteries. Our faith, culture and spirituality help us feel our affinity.”

After the thanksgiving the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia proceeded to the Throne Hall of the Patriarchal residence. Addressing His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said in particular:

“You were elected Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in the times of challenges for your Church. The past three years were marked by disorders and conflicts that posed a threat to the unity of the Church. That situation caused our deep concern, and we prayed to the Lord, asking for His help and support. I am glad that a considerable part of those problems has become a thing of the past. It is completely obvious that the Church has preserved her unity. The Synod has resumed its activity and, thanks be to God, today you as Primate can rely on your bishops and clergy for fulfilling the tasks you are faced with.”

His Holiness noted the importance of Representations of the Russian Church in Karlovy Vary and of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in Moscow, and mentioned an important event due to take place in October 2016 – the Days of the Russian Religious Culture in Slovakia.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Rastislav expressed his gratitude to the Russian Orthodox Church for her support given in the times of difficulties for the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia and said he hoped that his visit would promote cooperation between the two Churches.

The Primate discussed various issues of mutual interest. After the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented church awards to the members of the delegation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photo by the Patriarchal Press Service*