



## **Patriarch Kirill meets with Japanese ambassador to Russia**

On August 24, 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the Japanese Ambassador to Russia Mr. Toyohisa Kozuki, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in the St. Daniel Monastery.

They were joined in their talk by Mr. D. Tsutihasi, the embassy's second secretary and head of the protocol department, and Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, vice-chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations (DECR), and D. Petrovsky, staff member of the DECR.

Welcoming the high guest, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill stated that the Russian Orthodox Church traditionally has very good and active relations with the Japanese embassy in Moscow. 'There are many reasons for it, and the most important one is that the Russian Orthodox Church's mission in Japan resulted in the emergence of the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church, which consists of several dozens of thousand faithful, while being a very important chain in the link between our nations. Japan is a large and multimillion-strong country but this relatively small Orthodox community has played a very important role in making cordial the relations between our nations because the Japanese people for us are spiritually close people', he said.

His Holiness recalled his visit to Japan in September 2012, during which he met with the Emperor Akihito and the Prime-Minister Yoshihito Noda and visited places affected by tsunami in 2011. 'We took that disaster with pain in our hearts, and I am delighted that the work to provide victims with humanitarian support made us even closer to many in Japan', he stressed.

Patriarch Kirill also said that the year 2016 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between Russia and Japan and Mr. Kozuki celebrates his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday that same year. 'I am confident that your appointment as ambassador coincides with an important period in the bilateral relations with Russia. I believe the Russian and Japanese peoples would like to see a radical change for the better in these relations and the overcoming of all the negative consequences of World War II so that a new page could be opened in the bilateral relations. God grant that your work in Moscow may promote it as much as possible'.

'During your visit to Japan in 2012, I had the honour of meeting you, and I always remember that meeting', Mr. Kozuki said in his response. He thanked Patriarch Kirill for the support given by the Russian Orthodox Church to the Japanese people who were affected by the destructive earthquake and

tsunami in 2011.

According to Mr. Kozuki, the Russian Orthodox Church plays a very important role being a moral support and value of the Russian society. During his previous trips to Russia, Mr. Kozuki and his wife visited churches and monasteries in Russia on several occasions. The Japanese ambassador said that his wife shared his interest in Russia's spiritual heritage, which is expressed in her longstanding iconographic work.

*DECR Communication Service*

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