



Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church meets for regular session

On 15 July 2016, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church met for a regular session under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia at the Patriarchal and Synodal residence in St Daniel's Monastery. The meeting began with a minute of silence in memory of the victims of the terrorist attack in Nice.

The list of permanent members of the Holy Synod includes Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Vladimir of *Chişinău* and All Moldova; Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, head of the metropolitan area in the Republic of Kazakhstan; Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan, head of the metropolitan area of Central Asia; Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Pavel of Minsk and Zaslavl, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

Invited to take part in the summer session (March-August) are Metropolitan Dimitry of Tobolsk and Tyumen; Metropolitan Georgy of Nizhny Novgorod and Arzamas; Metropolitan Mitrofan of Gorlovka and Slavyansk; Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal and Canada; and Bishop Alexander of Daugavpils and Rezekne.

The members of the Holy Synod expressed the position of the Russian Orthodox Church on the Council held on the Island of Crete on June 18-26, 2016. The Synod acknowledged that the Council that had taken place in Crete, in which the Primates and hierarchs of ten out of fifteen autocephalous Orthodox Local Churches had participated, was an important event in the history of the conciliar process in the Orthodox Church, and stressed that the principle of consensus constituted the basis for pan-Orthodox cooperation throughout the conciliar process. At the same time, the members of the Synod stated that the holding of a Council in the absence of consent from a number of autocephalous Orthodox Churches violated this principle; therefore, the Council that took place in Crete cannot be considered to be pan-Orthodox while the documents adopted by it to be considered expressing pan-Orthodox consensus. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church charged the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission with publishing and studying the officially attested copies of the documents approved by the Crete Council, taking into account possible responses and remarks of the Most Reverend hierarchs, theological schools, theologians, clergy, monastics and laity, and after a comprehensive study to submit the conclusions to the Holy Synod.

The participants in the meeting heard the reports on His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's visit to Mount Athos that took place in May on the occasion of the celebrations marking the millennium of the Russian monks' presence on the Holy Mountain, as well as on His Holiness' visits to the dioceses of St. Petersburg, Tikhvin, Pyatigorsk, Neftekamsk, Ufa, Yoshkar-Ola, Syktyvkar, and Vorkuta in April-July 2016. The Synod thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for the work he had carried out and expressed gratitude to the representatives of the Church and secular authorities for the warm welcome extended to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and those who had accompanied him on his visits.

The members of the Synod expressed their deep appreciation to the Russian President Vladimir Putin for his initiative to establish the Russian Literature and Language Society and thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia for his consent to head the organization.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church approved the decisions of the Bishops' Council of the Russian Church Outside of Russia concerning the election of Archimandrite Irenei (Steenberg) as Bishop of Sacramento, vicar of the Western American Diocese.

In compliance with the decision of the Holy Synod, the Patriarchal Council for Culture was reorganized into a religious organization with the status of a Synodal department. Bishop Tikhon of Yegorievsk was appointed chairman of the Patriarchal Council for Culture; Hieromonk Pavel (Scherbatov) from the Moscow Sretensky Monastery was appointed its vice-chairman.

The Holy Synod approved the text of the prayer service dedicated to the Svena-Pechory Icon of the Mother of God, as well as the troparion, the kontakion and the prayer to St Herman of the Zosimas Hermitage, and new versions of the Akathistos to the Optina Elders and of the Akathistos to St John the Russian.

The Holy Synod took a decision to canonize as locally venerated saints of the Orthodox Church in Moldova Metropolitan Gabriel of *Chişinău* and Khotin (Bănulescu-Bodoni; †1821) and Blessed Agatha (Maranchuk; †1843).

During the meeting, a number of decisions were taken concerning interreligious cooperation, church-state relations and other church activities.

At the conclusion of the session, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church congratulated Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna on his Name Day and awarded Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal and Canada the Order of St Innocent the Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, 2nd class, in consideration of his zealous service to the Church.

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