On the last day of his visit to Latin America, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates Liturgy at the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul in Sao Paulo



On 21 February 2016, Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul in Sao Paolo, in the archdiocese of Brazil of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

Concelebrating with His Holiness were:

hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Antioch – Metropolitan Damaskinos of Sao Paolo and All Brazil; Metropolitan Antonius of Mexico, Venezuela, Central America and the Caribbean Islands; Metropolitan Silouan of Buenos Aires and Argentina; Bishop Romanos of Edessa, vicar of the archdiocese of Brazil;

hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church – Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Anthony of Borispol and

Brovary, Chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Bishop Peter of Cleveland; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Bishop John of Caracas and South America; Bishop George of Canberra; Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America; Bishop Kallistrat of Gorno-Altaysk and Chemal; Bishop Nicholas of Manhattan; and Bishop Anthony of Bogorodsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad;

clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church – Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Rev. Sergiy Malashkin, rector of the Church of St Zinaida in Rio de Janeiro; Rev. Roman Kunen, rector of the parish of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God in Rio de Janeiro; Rev. Alexander Volkov, head of the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; priests of the Brazil deanery of the diocese of Argentina and South America;

as well as priests of the archdiocese of Brazil of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Church Slavonic and the Portuguese languages. Praying at the service were representatives of the Russian and the Syrian and Lebanese Diasporas in Brazil who had heartily welcomed the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Among those present in the church were also Mr. Geraldo Alkmin, Governor of the state of Sao Paolo; Mr. Fernando Haddad, Mayor of Sao Paolo; Mr. Sergey Akopov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Brazil; Mr. Konstantin Kamenev, Consul-General of the Russian Federation in Sao Paolo; the Archbishop of Sao Paolo, Odilo Pedro Cardinal Scherer; diplomats accredited in Sao Paolo; and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and other Christian confessions in Brazil.

The Gospel reading was followed by a homily delivered by Patriarch Kirill.

During the Litany of Fervent Supplication, prayers were said for Christians "suffering persecution in the Middle East and other lands." His Holiness offered up a prayer for peace in the Middle East.

After the Liturgy, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Sao Paolo greeted the Primate of the Russian Church and presented him with an icon of Ss Peter and Paul.

Expressing his gratitude to Metropolitan Damaskinos, His Holiness Patriarch said in particular:

"You lead the largest Orthodox community in Brazil, as evidenced by this majestic Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul. You hospitably gave me an opportunity to celebrate the Divine Liturgy here with you and other brothers. It is in this church that I have deeply felt the pain of your people suffering in Syria and

Lebanon, as well as the pain of all Christians persecuted all over the world today.

“I would like to thank you for the prayers that you offer up for your brothers and sisters oppressed in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq these days. I would also like to thank you for your warm attitude to our Church, for the love that you have for our people. Our Churches show an example of fraternal relationships based on true love for each other. Being now in this grand cathedral, I would like to express my gratitude to His Beatitude Patriarch John of Antioch for his ministry of shepherding the flock of the Patriarchate of Antioch in war-torn Syria and suffering Lebanon. Today the sufferings of Christians in the Middle East and all over the world are becoming, by God’s mercy, the central issue and a matter of general concern. I think that my meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis and the declaration we had signed have made its considerable contribution to it.

“This declaration focuses on the persecutions and sufferings of Christians and offers a foundation for our joint actions aimed at protecting suffering Christians, as well as at making this world a more tranquil place, so that people may learn to live together, and so that people of different beliefs may realize one indisputable truth – that lasting peace can never be achieved through war and violence.

“However, there are two exceptions to this saying: when a nation defends its homeland and when honest people combat terrorism. That is why we, Pope Francis and I, called upon all those who today are involved in various hostilities in Syria and the Middle East to overcome their differences and form a joint coalition to combat terrorism. People in Russia and other countries under the omophorion of the Russian Orthodox Church take to heart sufferings of your people. Today every effort is being made to defend your people, to send humanitarian aid to those suffering and to cooperate with others in order to re-establish lasting and just peace in the Middle East.

“I am leaving Brazil and Latin America today. I would like to avail myself of this last opportuniy to address the Latin Americans, the Brazilians, and to express my deep gratitude for your love and hospitality which I have felt on this continent. This hospitality is certainly grounded in Christian love which is the most solid foundation of peace and the best means of achieving justice.

“May the Lord preserve Brazil, Latin America, and our Churches, and may He help all of us build up a new life without wars, conflicts and lies, with no one ever trying to dominate others! May God save His creation!”

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The Divine Liturgy was followed by a meeting between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and Mr. Geraldo Alkmin, Governor of the state of Sao Paolo.

Greeting the governor, the Primate of the Russian Church said in particular:

“I am very pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you. As I have already said today, my visit to Latin America, to Brazil, has struck a chord with me. It is symbolic that my trip began in Cuba which is called the gates to Latin America and where I had the meeting with His Holiness Pope Francis.

“I am very satisfied with the meetings I had in Latin America. Yet, the most important is that I am very satisfied with meeting people of this continent. Indeed, we have common Christian roots. It is the foundation of any kind of cooperation.”

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed the Archbishop of Sao Paolo, Odilo Pedro Cardinal Scherer, who also took part in the meeting, wishing the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church in Brazil to “respond to the challenges, which often derive from human sinful nature and which are often justified and even introduced… due to a wrong understanding of tolerance and human freedom.”

Greeting Patriarch Kirill, Mr. Geraldo Alkmin expressed his hope that the visit of His Holiness would help strengthen Christian values and principles in Latin America and stressed the importance of the meeting of Patriarch Kirill and Pope Frances held in Cuba on February 12.

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Later that day a reception in honour of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia was given at the Syrian social club in Sao Paolo on behalf of the archdiocese of Brazil of the Patriarchate of Antioch.

Greeting all those present, His Holiness expressed his hope that peace would be re-established in the Syrian land and people of different faiths would again be able to live in peace with each other in Syria and other countries of the Middle East.

Metropolitan Damaskinos of Sao Paolo and All Brazil thanked Patriarch Kirill for the honour he had done to the archdiocese of Brazil by officiating at the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral of Ss Peter and Paul.

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To conclude his visit to Brazil, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visited the Russian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Sao Paolo.

His Holiness was welcomed to the church by Bishop Leonid of Argentina, Brazil and South America and Rev. Dionisy Kazantsev, rector of the parish.

Patriarch Kirill thanked Fr. Dionisy for taking unceasing care of the Orthodox Russian community and for his zealous missionary activities. Speaking to the parishioners, His Holiness asked for their prayers since as Primate he needs them to carry out his difficult ministry.

At present the parish renders support to compatriots residing in Sao Paolo, organizing children's matinees and concerts and gathering food stuffs and necessities for nursing homes and the Russian expatriates serving their sentences in prisons of the state of Sao Paolo. The church has a library of classic and children's literature and offers Portuguese language courses to its parishioners.

That same day later, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and his suite left for Moscow.

Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia/

DECR Communication Service

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