Patriarch Kirill meets with President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil and visits Orthodox church in the capital city



On February 19, 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia began his official visit to the Federative Republic of Brazil. His Holiness made this visit at the invitation of President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil.

At Brasilia's airport, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was met by Russia's Ambassador S. Akopov, Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America and other officials.

From the airport His Holiness proceeded to the Russian Embassy in Brasilia. At the embassy His Holiness gave his benediction to diplomats and their family members.

Then His Holiness arrived at the Presidential residence and was welcomed at the entrance by Ms Dilma Rousseff. The President of Brazil took the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church to the residence hall

for negotiations.

From the Russian Orthodox Church the meeting was attended by Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Anthony of Borispol and Brovary, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate administrative secretariat; and Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America. The Brazilian side was represented by Minister of External Relations Mauro Vieira, Presidential special foreign policy adviser Marco Aurelio Garcia, and Deputy Minister of External Relations Simas Magalhães. Among the attendees was also Russian Ambassador in Brazil S. Akopov.

The meeting was held in a warm and friendly atmosphere. Patriarch Kirill told Ms. Rousseff about his meeting with Pope Francis of Rome, which took place on February 12 in Cuba. They also discussed international relations, especially the Syrian conflict.

On February 19, Patriarch Kirill also visited the ROC church of Our Lady the Odigitria in Brasilia. He was welcomed at the entrance to the church by the rector, Father Francisco de Assis da Cruz Feitosa. His Holiness held a prayer service at the church.

Among the worshippers were members of the ROC official delegation, Bishop John of Caracas and South America, Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America, and Archpriest Anatoly Topala, dean of the diocese of Argentina's district of Brazil.

Present in the church were Russian Ambassador S. Akopov, Byelorussian Ambassador L. Krupets, Armenian Ambassador A. Galoyan, Syrian Ambassador Hassan Nseyr, staff members of the Russian embassy and representatives of the Syrian diaspora.

After the prayer service, Bishop Leonid and Father Francisco extended greetings to His Holiness.

Addressing the congregation, Patriarch Kirill said in particular, 'I am very glad to come to this magnificent church, which was built through the efforts of Father Francisco, benefactors and those faithful who eagerly wished to worship at this place. I thank you all for your efforts.

'The way to God is always thorny. God has warned us that the way to Him is very narrow. Most people today wish to make their life journey along a broad path. They want to have more, to consume more, to have more pleasure. However, very few would associate human happiness and wellbeing with overcoming difficulties, including inner problem, which everyone has.
'The Lord offers us a narrow path, meaning in the first place the need for one to overcome one's own inner problems and to conquer sin in oneself. But this path attracts very few; for it is difficult, though

grace-giving and radiant. This path is also full of joy. I can imagine, Father Francisco, what a joy you felt in your heart when you managed to build this church and to assemble your community despite great difficulties.

‘I am happy to find here, in Brazil, in this remarkable church, the faithful people. I wish you all strong and firm faith, the ability to overcome both inner and outer problems, to preserve the faith in our hearts and remember that with the faith and with God we can overcome any difficulties’.

In recognition of his work for the good of the Church, His Holiness granted Bishop Leonid of Argentina a pectoral icon produced for the millennium of the repose of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles ‘I would like to thank His Grace Leonid, among other things, for what has happened here, in the city of Brasilia. We came to believe in Father Francisco, you supported and ordained him. And I know that you have taken this community close to your heart’, His Holiness noted.

In gratitude for their work, Patriarch Kirill granted Father Francisco and his wife a copy of the Icon of Our Lady of Kazan. To the parish he gave an icon of St. Luka (Voyno-Yasenetsky). The faithful received from His Holiness little icons of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles with a Patriarch blessing inscribed on them.

The church of Our Lady the Odigitria is the only Russian Orthodox church in Brasilia. It was built several years ago with the money provided by Father Francisco de Assis da Cruz Feitosa. Father Francisco was born to a Catholic family in Brazil. In 1994 he embraced Orthodoxy. In 2014, Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America ordained him a presbyter. Many icons in the church have been painted by Father Francisco himself. There are also images made by Ms. Marina Sesso, a local icon-painter.

In the evening of February 19, Patriarch Kirill arrived in Rio de Janeiro. He was met by Russian Consul General V. Tokmakov and other officials.

On February 20, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church will hold a prayer service for persecuted Christians at the Statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro.

Patriarchal Press Service

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Photos by Patriarchal Press Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/49716/