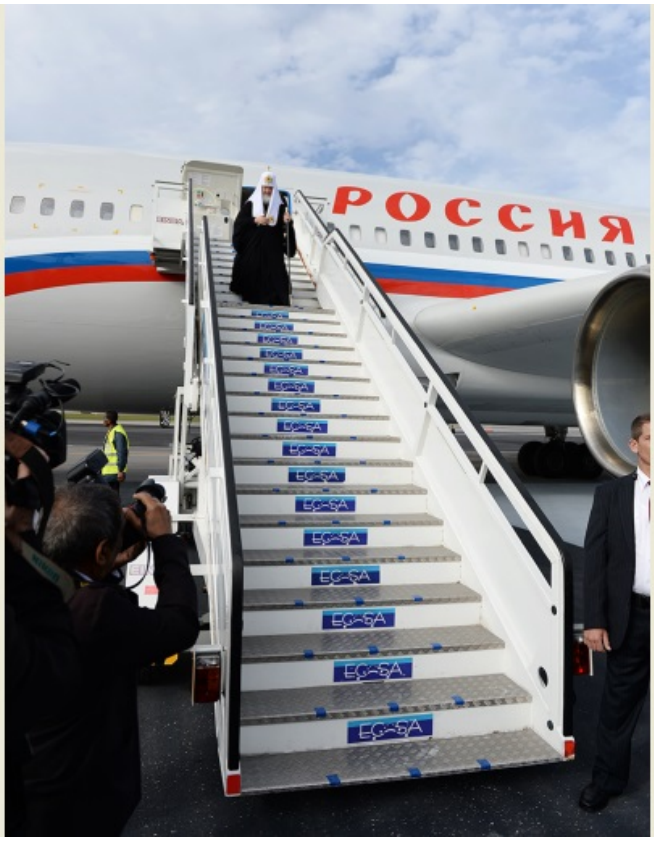
His Holiness Patriarch Kirill arrives in Cuba



On 11 February 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia began his Primatial visit to Latin America.

Cuba is the first country that he is visiting. His Holiness has come to Cuba at the invitation of Mr. Raúl Castro, President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba.

It is the first ever visit of a Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to Latin America. Prior to his elevation to the Patriarchal throne in 2009, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill visited Cuba in 1998, 2004 and 2008 in his capacity as chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and made his outstanding contribution to the promotion of contacts with this and other countries of Latin America. His Holiness will also visit the Republic of Paraguay and the Federative Republic of Brasil.

At Havana's José Martí International Airport, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was met by Mr. Raúl Castro Ruz, President of Cuba's Council of State and Council of Ministers.

Among those who met the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia at Havana's airport were also Mr. Esteban Lazo Hernández, President of the National Assembly of People's Power of the Republic of

Cuba; Mr. Mikhail Kamynin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Cuba; Mr. Alexander Alexandrov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Belarus to the Republic of Cuba; and other officials.

Addressing the mass media representatives, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said:

“It is with warm feelings that I have come for the fourth time to the land of Cuba. I have arrived here on a friendly visit at the invitation of the head of the Republic of Cuba, Mr. Raúl Castro Ruz, President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers. The people of Cuba and the people of Russia have been linked by the bonds of cooperation and sincere friendship for many years. Addressing the Cuban people, I would like to say that good feelings the Russian people have for Cuba are getting stronger today.

“I would like to convey to you cordial greetings from the citizens of Russia, as well as from all the people of the historical Rus’. I wish prosperity to the people of Cuba and happiness to each Cuban. May God’s mercy be with you.”

A brief meeting at the José Martí International Airport between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and Mr. Raúl Castro followed.

An important item on the program of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Cuba is his meting with Pope Francis. It will take place at Havana’s José Martí International Airport on February 12. The meeting has been arranged in view of the crossing in their itineraries. Pope Francis will make a stop in Cuba on his way to Mexico. A joint declaration is expected to be signed at the conclusion of the meeting. As the Joint press release of the Holy See and the Moscow Patriarchate reads, “this meeting of the Primates of the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, after a long preparation, will be the first in history and will mark an important stage in relations between the two Churches. The Holy See and the Moscow Patriarchate hope that it will also be a sign of hope for all people of good will. They invite all Christians to pray fervently for God to bless this meeting, that it may bear good fruits.”

Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia/

DECR Communication Service

Photo by Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

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