



## **Patriarch Kirill leaves for Cuba**

In the morning of February 11, 2016, His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, left Moscow for a primatial visit to the Republic of Cuba, Republic of Paraguay and the Federative Republic of Brazil.

At Vnukovo Airport in Moscow, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was seen off by Metropolitan Varsonofy of St Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Arseny of Istra, first patriarchal vicar in Moscow; the patriarchal vicars – Bishops Feofilakt of Dmitrov, Savva of Voskresensk, Tikhon of Yegorievsk and Paramon of Bronnitsa; Archpriest Vladimir Divakov, patriarchal secretary; Moscow clergy, as well as Cuba's Ambassador to Moscow Emilio Lozada Garcia.

In a conversation with the Cuban ambassador, Patriarch Kirill said, 'I always visit Cuba with a special feeling because so much is linked with it in the history of our people. From my heart, I wish prosperity to your remarkable country'. In his turn, Mr. Emilio Lozada Garcia noted that His Holiness the Patriarch was always a welcome guest in Cuba and wished him a fruitful trip.

Patriarch Kirill addressed the send-off party, saying, 'I wholeheartedly greet you, dear Eminences and Fathers! I am glad to see you before this long and difficult journey and to ask for your prayers. You know that I am heading for a distant point – Cuba, and then for other countries in the Latin America; so, spiritual and physical resources are needed for it. Seeing you and hoping for your prayers, I receive spiritual and physical strength'.

The official delegation accompanying His Holiness includes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR); Metropolitan Anthony of Borispol and Brovary, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate administrative secretariat; Bishop Kallistrat of Gorno-Altaysk and Chermal; Bishop Anthony of Bogorodsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate office for institutions abroad; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Andrey Milkin, head of the patriarchal protocol service; and Rev. Alexander Volkov, head of the Patriarchal press service.

Cuba will be the first country to be visited by Patriarch Kirill during his visit to the Latin America. In Havana, His Holiness will meet with the Chairman of the State Council and the Council of Ministers Raul Castro Ruz and celebrate the Divine Liturgy at the church of Our Lady of Kazan. On February 12, Patriarch Kirill will meet with Pope Francis of Rome.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Patriarchal Press Service*

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