The Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church opens in Moscow



On 2 February 2016, the Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church has opened in the Hall of Church Councils of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Attending the Council are archpastors from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Tajikistan. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Estonia, and also from far abroad countries with the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Invited to the Council are 354 archpastors from 293 dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Divine Liturgy, praying at which were His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and bishops invited to the Council, was celebrated before the sessions. Archpriest Mikhail Ryazantsev and Moscow clerics officiated.

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia chairs the Bishops' Council in accordance to the Statute of the

Russian Orthodox Church.

The Presidium includes permanent members of the Holy Synod: Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev 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 Zaslavsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

The Presidium also includes the bishops invited to the winter session of the Holy Synod: Metropolitan Isidor of Smolensk and Roslavl, Archbishop Ioann of Magadan and Sinegorsk; Bishop Markell of Beltsy and Felesht; and Bishop Varlaam of Makhachkala and Grozny.

Also, in compliance with the decision of the Holy Synod of 24 December 2015 (minutes 96) and taking into consideration the importance of participation of the primates of the autonomous and self-governing parts of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Council leadership, included in the Presidium were Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York and Metropolitan Alexander of Riga and All Latvia.

Prayer service was celebrated before the first plenary session. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill offered a prayer asking God's blessing for the Council's work.

His Holiness addressed the audience with an introductory word in which he noted that the Bishops' Council was convened a year earlier than the Statute requires due to the preparation to the Pan-Orthodox Council.

"The Bishops' Council of 2013 underscored that the preparation must provide for extensive discussion of the resolutions due to be adopted at the Council and take particular care for preserving the purity of the Orthodox teaching. That is why the Holy Synod decided that the time had come for the detailed discussion of the issues that may arise in the pre-council process,' Patriarch Kirill said and added:

"Also, we will discuss a difficult theme of the 'Yekaterinburg remains' and the implementation of the decisions adopted by that Council."

The Council's members adopted the rules of procedure, programme and agenda and approved the membership of the Credentials, Drafting, and Tally Commissions.

Metropolitan Varsonofy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, was elected secretary of the Bishops' Council; Archbishop Innokenty of Vilnius and Lithuania – chairman of the Credentials Commission; Metropolitan of Pavel of Minsk and Zaslavsk – chairman of the Drafring Commissions; and Metropolitan Sergy of Ternopol and Kremenets – chairman of the Tally Commission.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia delivered a repot on the life and activity of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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