Patriarch Kirill visits Moscow Patriarchate representation to World Council of Churches in Geneva



In the evening of January 24, 2016, after his work at the Synaxis of the Primates of Local Orthodox Churches, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visited the Moscow Patriarchate representation to the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

At the Patriarchal parish of the Russian Orthodox Church representation – the church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Mother of God, His Holiness celebrated a thanksgiving to the Mother of God.

Among the numerous worshippers were Archbishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe (Russian Church Outside Russia), Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate administrative secretariat, Archpriest Mikhail Gundyaev, Moscow Patriarchate representative to the World Council of Church and international organizations in Geneva.

Present in the church was Mr. A. Borodavkin, permanent representative of the Russian Federation to

the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

After the prayer service, His Holiness Kirill addressed the faithful:

‘Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am especially delighted to have sung our prayers together with you in this overcrowded church. I happened to celebrate in this church in various circumstances, both when the parishioners were ten times fewer and when more people began to come.

Many things are associated with this parish for me. I came to Geneva 45 years ago and began my service here. When the church was moved to this place, on entering this facility I felt almost no difference because there were the same icons, the same people, the same choir. Now the choir has greatly changed but we still joyfully greet Marianna Mikhailovna. I no longer see the ones with whom I began my service. For this reason, all this touches very profound human chords. I believe, each of you can understand it. Those who measure their life by such period as 45, 50, 60 years do understand how to appreciate all that was in the past.

There were very many hard things because I was quite young then. I was 24 when I was appointed to the important position of representing the Russian Church to the World Council of Churches here in Geneva. At that time I had neither experience nor adequate knowledge of foreign languages nor understanding at all of what was happening in the West generally. It was a world completely closed for me and I had to study, to understand, to see and to experience one thing and another and still another. As I was entering that life, I came to love Geneva, this parish of ours, the parishioners to whom I became almost kin. Therefore, any of my consequent visits to Geneva was also linked with a visit to this church and celebration in it. After the Patriarchal enthronement I have had no such opportunity, so you can understand my feelings with which I am together with you today.

I would like to wish you all, first of all, to preserve the faith in your hearts because it is a great power. I am saying so not only because I am delivering a homily as a Patriarch. I am saying so from my personal experience, believe me. In my life, I have had to go through the most difficult circumstances when it seemed that I no human resources is left, no human mind can cope. And when you realize that everything suddenly changes overnight, it becomes clear that it is nothing else than the Lord’s response to prayer, a touch of divine grace. Therefore, let no life circumstances, even the hardest ones, confuse you. Remember that a believer has in his hands the enormous power of prayer based on the inner feeling of faith.

It does not mean that we should do nothing and await the help of God. The Lord never helps lazy people, never helps those who do nothing, because He cannot indulge human weaknesses. He supports only our efforts. And when we combine efforts for solving problems, which we encounter, while asking for the Lord's help, then there happens this combination of the divine and the human in our life, and we become stronger. And this power does not depend on our physical health, nor does it depend on our job or social status because it is the power of God.

Therefore, I would like to say to you all: pray harder, never doubt your faith and remember that faith should not be a tenth or twentieth concern in your life. When we finish all the chores and only after that drop in a church, then the Lord would help us in the same measure – ten or twenty time as little. And if the faith is a priority for us, if we build our life so that it may correspond to what is meant by 'to live in Christian way', then the Lord will meet us halfway.

Father Mikhail, I would like to congratulate you. By a wonderful coincidence, today is your Patron Saint's Day. When all this was planned, believe me, I did not think about it. It appears to be divine providence. On this day, my late father, Father Mikhail's grandfather, celebrated his Patron Saint's Day too. So, we pray for the rest of his soul and for your health today. May the Lord help you to work in a worthy way so that you may be close to people, help them with solving their spiritual problems, pray together with them and carry out the important service of representative of the Russian Church. In memory of today's event, I would like to grant you this cross. It is a special jubilee cross which has been produced for the Millennium of the Blessed Demise of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles. May the Lord preserve you on all the ways of your life.

And to the parish I would like to give the same icon as I gave to the Church in Toepffer Street (The Cathedral of the Elevation of the Cross of the dioceses of Western Europe, Russian Church Outside Russia, on rue Rodolphe-Toepffer in Geneva – *ed.*), Since it is essentially one Orthodox community, let there be this wonderful image of St. Sergius of Radonezh in this church as well.

Just as yesterday in that church, I would like to give every one of you images of the Saviour-Not-Made-with-Hands with a Patriarchal blessing. May the Lord preserve you'.

After the service, the parishioners had a tea party together with His Holiness Kirill.

Tomorrow Patriarch Kirill will participate in further work of the Synaxis of the Primates of Local Orthodox Church.

Patriarchal Press Service

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