



Russian Orthodox Church representatives take part in events for Patriarch of Antioch's visit to USA



On July 27, 2015, the administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA Bishop Ioann of Naro-Fominsk, at the invitation of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada, took part in the ceremony of presenting the degree of Doctor of Theology *honoris causa* to His Beatitude John X, Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East, in recognition of his efforts for peace against the severe persecution of Christians in the Middle East.

The event took place at the theological school's assembly hall. In attendance were Metropolitan Joseph of New York and North America, the bishops and clergy of the Patriarchate of Antioch who accompanied Patriarch John, Bishop Maxim of Western America (Serbian Orthodox Church), Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West (Orthodox Church in America), Archimandrite Nathanael (Simeonidis), director of the inter-church relations department of the Greek Archdiocese in the USA, as well as professors and students of St Vladimir's Seminary.

In his welcoming address, Archpriest John Berh, dean of the seminary, spoke about the long-standing cooperation between the Antiochian Archdiocese in the USA and St. Vladimir's Seminary. After that, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon presented the Primate of the Church of Antioch with the honorary doctoral diploma and pectoral cross.

In his speech in response, Patriarch John thanked the St. Vladimir's faculty and spoke about the situation in the Middle East, where hostilities continued to cause suffering to both Christians and Muslims, who for centuries used to live in peace and good-neighbourly relations. Patriarch John also answered questions from participants in the ceremony.

On July 28, a grand reception was given on the occasion of Patriarch John of Great Antioch and All the East's visit to the USA, at the residence of the head of the Antiochian Archdiocese in the USA. There were representatives of the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Antioch, the Orthodox Church in America, the Roman Catholic Church, the Syrian Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

From the Russian Orthodox Church there were the First-Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, and Bishop Ioann of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA.

Present were also diplomats representing Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus and Greece.

In his welcoming speech, Metropolitan Joseph pointed to the importance of the visit made by the Primate of the Church of Antioch to the USA, especially at a time when blood continued to be spilt in the Middle East. He spoke about the burdens humbly endured by his flock and called all the present to speak out about the grave situation in the Middle East, where Christians, along with others, who used to live in peace for centuries, are subjected to persecution. His Beatitude stressed that what all people in the Middle East need was peace, not protectorate from any state.

During his personal talk with Patriarch John X, Bishop Ioann, administrator of the Patriarchate Parishes in the USA, conveyed the words of support and best wishes from the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and assured him that the Moscow Patriarchate will continue exerting every effort to help normalize the situation in the Middle East, the website of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA reports.

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