Ceremony of awarding degree of Doctor Honoris Causa to Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia takes place at Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Post-Graduate Studies

On 13 December 2014, a ceremony of awarding the Doctor *Honoris Causa* diploma to Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia was held at the Main Hall of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute for Post-Graduate Studies.

The decision to confer the degree on Metropolitan Kallistos was made by the Academic Council of the Theological Institute and was approved by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Among those who attended the ceremony were Bishop Irinej of Bačka (Serbian Orthodox Church); Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio to Russia; Chaplain Clive Fairclough, rector of the Anglican parish in Moscow; Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuyevo, a Patriarchal vicar, chairman of the

Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry; Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, a Patriarchal vicar; hieromonk Ioann (Kopeykin), pro-rector of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute for Post-Graduate Studies; archpriest Vladimir Vorobyov, rector of St Tikhon's Orthodox University; participants in the 2nd International Theological Patristic Conference 'St. Simeon the New Theologian and His Spiritual Heritage'; members of the Academic Council of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute; faculty and students of the Theological Institute; and staff members of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, rector of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute for Post-Graduate Studies, greeted all those present, saying in particular:

"It is a great joy and privilege for us that, with the blessing of Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, doctor of theology *honoris causa* degree is awarded to one of the most notable Orthodox hierarchs of our times, Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia.

"At the very onset of his academic work, the Metropolitan chose to focus on patristic studies, and he has been faithful to this filed for many decades of his academic endeavours… Quite a few hundreds of academic papers that influenced the current development of the Orthodox theology were prepared and defended under his guidance.

"During his years at Oxford, Metropolitan Kallistos equipped many scholars of Orthodox theology and patristic heritage, and his graduates represent Orthodox Church around the globe, in the East, as well as in the West, from New York to Moscow. Among his disciples are hierarchs of the Local Orthodox Churches, renowned theologians working in the fields of patristic studies and church histories, and members of other Christian denominations.

"During the years of his ministry, the Metropolitan has participated in many important projects aimed at developing Orthodox scholarship and making Orthodox Christianity better known in the West. His Eminence is the chairman of the group Friends of Orthodoxy on Iona (in Scotland) and of the Friends of Mount Athos. Besides, the Metropolitan chairs the Committee on Orthodox-Anglican dialogue and is a member of the Committee on dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church.

"The Metropolitan discusses Russian spiritual tradition as well. It was in Russia that the heritage of Byzantine hesychasm was revived in the ascetic life of such great saints as Sergius of Radonezh, Nil Sorsky, Seraphim of Sarov and Silouan the Athonite. Metropolitan Kallistos wrote a few papers on the heritage of St. Silouan, and his interest in the life of this saint originated not only from reading St. Silouan's writing but from a personal acquaintance with one of St. Silouan's closest disciples,

Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov)."

In a solemn atmosphere, the rector of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute for Post-Graduate Studies handed over to Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia the Doctor *Honoris Causa* diploma and a doctoral cross.

Among the speakers were also His Eminence Kallistos's other students: Archpriest John Behr, Dean of St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, USA; Dr. Archimandrite Irenei (Steenberg), Dean of Saints Cyril and Athanasius of Alexandria Institute for Orthodox Studies, USA; and hieromonk Nikolai (Sakharov), professor of the Cambridge Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies and the Moscow Theological Academy.

Metropolitan Kallistos expressed his gratitude to Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute for awarding him the degree of Doctor *Honoris Causa*. In his address he said:

"I wish to express my profound gratitude to the rector of the Institute, His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk and to the Academic Council of the Institute, who have extended this honour to me. I am happy to count Metropolitan Hilarion not only as one of my former students, but as my personal friend. I feel that this [honour] that you have conferred upon me in your Institute strengthens our bonds with one another. I would also like to thank my three former pupils for their generous words, of which I feel unworthy.

In his speech, Metropolitan Kallistos shared with those present his reflections on theology, saying:

"Theology is not only an academic discipline to be pursued with scholarly detachment and objectivity. Theology involves commitment, the dedication of our whole life. Between theology and prayer, between doctrinal studies and our profound involvement in the living out of a Christian life there is an essential connection.

"We are all familiar with the words of the desert father, Evagrius of Pontus, "The theologian is the one who prays, and if you pray in truth, you are a theologian." So it is my hope that this Institute will be not only a place of study, but also a centre of prayer. Bearing in mind the connection between theology and life, I would like to ask this morning not so much the question "what", as the question "who": not so much the question what is theology, but I would like to speak briefly who are the theologians who have given me the greatest inspiration.

"First, thinking of Russian theologians of the 20th century, the two who most influenced me were Father George Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky. I was inspired by Father George Florovsky's vision of neo-

patristic synthesis. I was inspired by Vladimir Lossky's understanding of mystical theology. I had the happiness and privilege to know both of them personally, and their example has inspired me in my years of teaching theology at Oxford.

"But I would like to extend my question this morning: who among the Holy Fathers of the Church have most inspired me? I find it difficult to know who to choose as the father closest to my heart. Perhaps, St Irenaeus; perhaps, St Maximus the Confessor; perhaps, St Symeon the New Theologian; or perhaps, St Gregory Palamas. All of them I regard as sources of personal illumination. But perhaps the father whom I love and esteem the most is St Gregory of Nyssa.

"I would like to speak this morning of two elements in his teaching that have particular value for me. They are both emphasized in his book *The Life of Moses*. He speaks there, in the first place, of the Christian journey as being marked by three stages. The first stage, and this is marked in *The Life of Moses*, is when he saw God in the burning bush. It was the vision of God in light, a cataphatic vision. Then there comes the second stage in *The Life of Moses*, when God accompanies the people of Israel in a pillar of cloud and fire, mixed light and darkness. Then comes the third stage when Moses enters deep darkness on Mount Sinai – an apophetic vision of God. And in this third stage he is taught that the true vision of God is non-vision, the true knowledge of God is unknowing. So there is the reconciliation of the opposites in the third stage.

"What is interesting here is that St Gregory envisages the Christian life as the journey not from darkness into light, but from light into darkness. The Christian path is an entry into mystery. And this is also true of the vocation of the theologian. The theologian is one who enters into the living mystery of the living and personal God. But in Gregory of Nyssa the darkness is not negative, it is, he says, "a luminous darkness". Thus, while the darkness signifies the Divine mystery, it is also a symbol of union with God. Moses is united with God in the darkness. So this darkness is not an absence. What Moses experiences on Mount Sinai is the love of God. But this luminosity, this union, this presence, this love are things that, on St Gregory of Nyssa's understanding, lie beyond words, beyond understanding.

"In theology we use our reasoning brain, because that is a gift from God. But always we recognize that in theology we are working on something that lies beyond our reasoning brain, because it is mystery.

"That is one thing I retain particularly from St Gregory of Nyssa. And then there is the second thing. After the three theophanies of which I have spoken, in the burning bush, in the pillar of cloud and fire, and in the darkness of Sinai, there comes the fourth theophany. St Gregory speaks of the vision of God received by Moses in the 33rd chapter of Exodus. God hides Moses in a cleft of a rock; and then God passes by in all His glory, and Moses looks out and sees the back part of God. What does this mean? If you see somebody's back, this means you are following them. So, says Gregory, to be a Christian, to be

a theologian is to follow Christ. But we never totally catch up with Him. He is always ahead of us. We see His back. So here we have a further paradox in St Gregory of Nyssa: to follow God is to meet Him face to face.

“Gregory sees a Christian life as involving infinite progress, which continues even in the age to come. When I was a child, I was given a book about Felix the Cat. And Felix the Cat was given a pair of magic boots. And with the help of these magic boots he kept walking everywhere. I remember the refrain in the book, “Felix, he kept walking, he kept walking on.” St Gregory of Nyssa was not, in fact, the author of this particular book, but it expresses his theology. To be a Christian, to be a theologian is to keep moving, to keep following, never to rest satisfied, always to move further. The essence of perfection is that we never become perfect. We always reach out to what lies in front of us. We always advance from glory to glory.

“I would apply this also to our work in theology. The theologian’s task is never complete. It is always provisional, always work in progress, always an unfinished programme. However eloquent we are as theologians, we never express more than a small part of the truth.

“St Irenaeus says, “In the age to come God will have new things to teach us and we shall always have new things to learn.” Those of you who teach theology here, those of you who are studying theology in this Institute – I hope you will always have this feeling that you have only heard a very small part of the story. There is so much more to be said. And we will never in this life say it all.

“Once more I express my gratitude to Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute for Post-Graduate Studies for the honour that they have bestowed upon me. May God bless all your teaching, your writing, and your study. May this Institute always be faithful to the vision of theology that St Gregory of Nyssa upheld.

“May you honour the living mystery that theology seeks to express. May your theology always be dynamic theology. When your faces are turned to the past, to the Holy Fathers, may your faces also be turned to the future. May you enter ever more deeply into the living mystery, always *reaching forward to what lies ahead*, as St Paul said (Phil. 3:13). That is my prayer for the Institute.”

To conclude the ceremony, the Moscow Synodal Choir performed a number of religious chants.

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