Primates of Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches meet with President of Serbia, Mr. Tomislav Nikolić



On 14 November 2014, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who is on an irenical visit to the Serbian Orthodox Church, and His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia met with H.E. Tomislav Nikolić, President of the Republic of Serbia.

Present at the meeting, which took place at the Presidential residence in Belgrade, were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral; H.E. Alexander Chepurin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Serbia; and Mr. Ivan Mrkić, Foreign Policy Advisor to the President of Serbia.

Addressing the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, Mr. Tomislav Nikolić noted that the peoples of Russia and Serbia were bound by historical ties.

According to the President of Serbia, the continuity of relations between the two countries is confirmed by the fact that Serbia and Russia go through the periods of successful development and trials at one and the same time.

Mr. Nikolić congratulated His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the conferment of the degree of Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Belgrade. “You have said that in Serbia you feel at home; and the Serbian people welcome you as one of their own,” the head of the state said and assured His Holiness Patriarch Kirill that all citizens of Serbia felt love and appreciation to him as Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

“We are undergoing hard times; Christianity is facing serious challenges. Yet, the Serbian Orthodox Church has the Russian Orthodox Church to rely on, and Serbia has the Russian Federation to rely on,” President Nikolić added.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill thanked the President of Serbia for his kind words, saying in particular:

“Indeed, ties of history and faith bind Russia and Serbia; and our Churches have been maintaining relations since the time of St. Sabbas of Serbia and up to these days.

“There were both heroic and tragic pages in our common history, but there have been no conflicts between Serbia and Russia. We would either win and rejoice together or suffer together. There have been much bloodshed and many afflictions, but ordeals have never prevailed over fellowship in the relations between Russia and Serbia.

“Today we sympathize with the Serbian population in Kosovo and Metohija and help those people as much as we can. It is our great hope that peace and justice will be finally established in the ancient land of Kosovo and Metohija, which is the spiritual centre of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

“Today I would like to note a high level of relations between the Serbian Church and the Russian Church. We cooperate at the inter-Orthodox level; we have warm fraternal bilateral relations. I recall with love the irenical visit of His Holiness to Moscow and Russia after his enthronement. Later he took part in the celebrations marking the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia and visited Moscow, Kiev and Minsk.

“I believe that our bilateral relations are an important factor of the pan-Orthodox unity. We uphold it and fight for it, because there are many forces which want the Orthodox to divide. However, it is our great hope that the Orthodox Church will keep her unity and ability to exert spiritual influence upon the

Orthodox people.

“…I want to assure you that the Russian Church will always be committed to supporting these historical and very important ties between our two nations. I would like to wish you and all the Serbian people God’s help and success in overcoming the challenges facing you today, so that whatever happens in the life of the Serbian people would lead to the strengthening of the basic principles of their national life, to the preservation of their national identity, and spiritual and cultural foundations.”

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