Patriarch Kirill meets with a group of orphans from Syria



On August 1, 2014, after the Divine Liturgy at the Memorial Church of Protomartyr George the Victorious on Poklonnaya Hill, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with a group of children from Syria, who were on summer vocations in Russia.

Before the meeting, the young guests were taken on a tour of the Victory Memorial on Poklonnaya Hill.

His Holiness addressed the children, saying:

“Dear children, I am delighted to see all of you in Moscow. We know what is going on in your homeland, Syria. We know how unfair is the suffering of your people but at the same time we admire the ability of your people to defend their freedom and independence. Your parents and your older brothers with arms in their hands are defending their homeland, and we admire their courage. But we know that among those who suffer are many peaceful people – women, old people and especially children. We help as

much we can. And we are very glad to host you in Russia.

“You are the future of Syria. You should build a strong and free state, so that nobody would ever want to destroy it. And we are confident that it will be so. Preserve the faith in our hearts, pray to God, and do well in school to really become spiritually and physically strong people.

I would like to cordially thank all those who have organized the coming of children from Syria and to greet the nuns and all the lay people who accompany you. May God’s blessing be with Syria and all your people and you, my dear children”.

His Holiness gave the children tokens of the meeting.

The children were accompanied by the abbot of the Monastery of the Most Holy Mother of God in Latakia (Patriarchate of Antioch); Archimandrite Mikhail (Yakob), member of the Syrian branch of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society, and Ms. Angela Ganem, director of the Damascus, based boarding school for children of the fallen servicemen. Participating in the meeting was also Mikhail Yakushev, first vice-president of the St. Andrew the-First- Called Foundation.

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The orphans from war-gripped Syria were invited by the St. Andrew Foundation and the Center of National Glory. Some 100 children from Orthodox orphanages run by monasteries of the Orthodox Church of Antioch and boarding school for children of the fallen servicemen will spend two weeks at the children’s recreation camp in the Moscow Region.

According to V. Yakunin, chairman of the Foundation’s board of trustees, the Foundation and the Center of National Glory already have an experience of organizing summer holidays for children from hot spots: ten years ago, 540 Serbian children from Kosovo and Metohija had a rest in Russia.

The Foundation’s initiative to organize summer viocations for Syrian children in Russia was discussed with Syria’s President Bashar Assad in January 2004, when a Russian parliamentary delegation was on a visit to Damascus. The delegation was accompanied there by Hegumen Arseny (Sokolov), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow to the Patriarch of Antioch, who was constructive in organizing the Syrian children’s trip to Russia.

The Syrian children will have a rest in the Moscow Region till August 11. There is a sports and culture program organized for them. They will be introduced to their Russian peers, take part in sports and creative work competitions, see the sights in Moscow and visit Moscow churches.

Patriarchal Press Service

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