The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church meets for regular session in St. Petersburg



On 30 May 2014, the session of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church was opened under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in the historic building of the Sacred Governing Synod in St. Petersburg.

Metropolitan Onufry of Chernovtsy and Bukovina, Locum Tenens of the Kievan Metropolitan See; Metropolitan Varsonofiy of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Pavel of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and All Moldova; Metropolitan Alexander of Astana and Kazakhstan, head of the metropolitan district in the Republic of Kazakhstan; Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan, head of the Central Asia metropolitan district;and Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations are permanent members of the Holy Synod.

Invited to the summer session (March-August 2014) were Metropolitan Alexander of Bryansk and Sevsk; Metropolitan Zinovy of Saransk and Mordovia; Archbishop Ionafan of Tulchin and Bratslav; Archbishop Michael of Geneva and West Europe (ROCOR); and Bishop Nikodim of Yeniseisk and Norilsk.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill opened the session and addressed the members of the Holy Synod:

'Your Eminences and Graces!

'I cordially greet you in the historic hall of the Sacred Governing Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. We gather here with special feelings as these walls testify to the living succession. Wherever the centre of the Church is, in Kiev or in Vladimir, in Moscow or St. Petersburg - these are just geographical places, while the Church in its entirety and in its unity on the vast space of Eurasia fulfils her mission in compliance with the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ passed to us by the holy apostles.

'The faithfulness to the principles of ordering the church life sanctified by the historical practice of the Church is, most probably, the key determinant of decisions taken by the Church. The Lord leads us through different trials, and we have known inner disorders and external unfavourable circumstances either ideological ones as was the case in our recent past, or political ones which we are encountering at present. Our task is to keep the Orthodox faith for our people and be guided in our activities only by the comprehension of God's will at any concrete moment.

'In secular language we define this as an abstraction from external factors. A certain abstraction is always necessary for the sake of the inner freedom to act. The Church cannot always act as she wills, but we must keep our inner freedom in the main things as our fathers did even in the hard time of persecution.

'We have a busy schedule today. We must consider current issues and think about a new diocese and the election of new bishops. During the last three years we have been actively strengthening our church life also by the establishment of new dioceses and consecration of new bishops. This is a very responsible work. Today we will talk with the candidates and come to a decision of their election or non-election.'

His Holiness addressed special greetings to Metropolitan Onufry, Locum Tenens of the Kievan Metropolitan See, saying:

'Vladyka, we are very happy that you are with us today. We are aware that the Lord has entrusted you with this responsible ministry at a difficult time, though there is never a simple time for the Church. We

believe that you, a man of profound faith and firm monastic tradition, will be able to take decisions for the good of the believers of Ukraine despite any difficult circumstances.

‘I would like to tell you that we all here feel compassion and share your pain. I sometimes think: when you find yourself in a calm atmosphere and thank God for that but recall the suffering of the Ukrainian people, these moments of tranquility disappear. One cannot stay calm and gentle when people suffer.

‘We all are working and praying for our Church, which bears responsibility for the spiritual state of the Orthodox Ukrainians, not to slip, not to make wrong moves or mistakes, but to remain able to appease human hearts. I wholeheartedly thank you, Your Eminence, and on behalf of the whole Church voice support to you, bishops, clergy and pious people of Ukraine. May God save you.’

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