His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch



On 25 January 2014, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in St Daniel's Monastery, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East, who is currently visiting the Russian Orthodox Church.

The delegation accompanying His Beatitude Patriarch John X on his visit includes Metropolitan Basilyos of Akkar; Metropolitan Ephrem of Tripoli; Archbishop Niphon of Filippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; archimandrite Philip (Yazegi); archimandrite Parthenius (Allati); archdeacon Gerasimus (Kabbas); and a number of lay people.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuyevo, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry;

archimandrite Alexy (Polikarpov), abbot of St Daniel's Monastery in Moscow; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR Secretary for Inter-Orthodox Relations; hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East; and deacon Feodor Shulga, a DECR staff-member.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill congratulated Patriarch John X on his election as the Primate of the Church of Antioch.

As Patriarch Kirill noted, the relations between the Church of Antioch and the Russian Orthodox Church have a long history and the Primates of the Church of Antioch often visited the Holy Rus'. During the talk, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill mentioned the visit of Metropolitan Antonio of Mexico to the Russian Orthodox Church for the celebration of the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia and the visit of Bishop Isaac of Apameia. Among the recent events mentioned by His Holiness was also the visit of Metropolitan Hilarion of Vokololamsk to Lebanon for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of episcopal consecration of Archbishop Niphon of Philippopolis, the head of the Representation of the Patriarchate of Antioch to the Moscow Patriarchate.

"We love His Eminence Archbishop Niphon and appreciate his work," Patriarch Kirill said, "For many years, he has served in Moscow for the benefit of our Churches..."

His Holiness also mentioned Metropolitan Hilarion's visit to Mexico and the meetings the DECR chairman had with Metropolitan Antonio of Mexico, Venezuela, Central America and the Caribbean Islands. "It is the Arab Diaspora, the members of your Church, that is the largest Orthodox community in Latin America. We consider it very important to maintain relations with that part of the Church of Antioch, since we also have dioceses and parishes in Latin America," the Primate of the Russian Church said.

"As for our bilateral relations, I would like to say that, as you know, we have recently made a decision to appoint a new representative of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Patriarchate of Antioch. It is hegumen Arseniy (Sokolov) who is here and whom I would like to introduce to you," Patriarch Kirill said.

As His Holiness noted, hegumen Arseniy has recently visited Syria. He accompanied a large delegation of the Russian parliamentaries on a humanitarian mission. "Certainly, you know about the efforts that the Russian Orthodox Church has been making to support her suffering brothers in Syria," Patriarch Kirill said, addressing the Primate of the Church of Antioch. "The turning point in our work for supporting the Syrian people was the Statement adopted by the Heads and Representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches Assembled for the Celebration of the 1025th Anniversary of the Baptism of Russia. The Statement was handed over to Russian President Vladimir Putin." His Holiness also mentioned that he

had sent a message to the U.S. President and that Mr. John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State, had replied to the letter on behalf of Mr. Barack Obama. “I was pleased to read in Mr. Kerry’s reply message that the USA are striving to settle the conflict by peaceful means,” His Holiness said. “Earlier, I also asked Mr. Obama to exert efforts in order to find out what had happened to the two abducted hierarchs, one of whom is your brother.”

“Speaking at many international forums, we express our position on the situation in Syria, especially on the sufferings of Christian and not only Christian population,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia added. “We are particularly concerned over the fact that, as a result of the conflict, Christians are fleeing the country and the Middle East in general.”

Having mentioned the aid that the Russian Church has been collecting for the suffering Syrian people, Patriarch Kirill said: “These are not some special donations coming from rich people or corporations. We just launch the fundraising among common parishioners. And I am glad that forty million rubles have already been sent to you for rendering humanitarian aid to the needy. Recently, we have collected additional three million rubles…”

As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia noted the Russian Orthodox Church has been working in close cooperation with the Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society on many issues, including the issue of sending humanitarian cargoes to Syria. Eight consignments of humanitarian aid have already been sent there. Recently, the news have come that the Syrian population is lacking for food, medicaments and articles of prime necessity. “Maybe, you have some ideas on what should now be sent as humanitarian aid. We will take your suggestions into consideration,” His Holiness said to the Primate of the Church of Antioch.

“Once again, I would like to express our concern over the abduction of your brother, Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo, as well as Metropolitan Mar Greorios Yohanna Ibrahim of the Syriac Orthodox Church. We have taken a number of steps,” His Holiness said, mentioning his appeals to Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to Mr. Rejep Taiip Erdogan, Prime Minster of Turkey. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also expressed his deep concern over the fate of the mother superior and sisters of the Convent in Maaloula, as well as over the fate of the children from the Convent’s orphanage.

His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Great Antioch and All the East thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and emphasized the importance of the efforts that the Russian Church has been making to help the Patriarchate of Antioch and to settle the situation in the region. Patriarch John X said, in particular: “I would like to express my respect and affectionate gratitude for what you have been doing for us… We wish you a long life and I hope for that the relationships between our Churches will continue

to develop.”

After the meeting, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented the members of the Antiochian delegation with the awards of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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