



Patriarch Kirill visits Church of Annunciation in Nazareth

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On 13 November 2012, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in Nazareth. Accompanying His Holiness were members of the official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church; Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain; and Archimandrite Stephanos (Dispirakis), representative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Meeting His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the square before the Church of the Annunciation were Metropolitan Kyriakos of Nazareth; Mr. Ramiz Jaraisy, Mayor of Nazareth; Dr. Azmi Hakim, chairman of the Orthodox parish's Council in Nazareth; Mr. Marjeh Cesar, Director of the Department for Christian Communities of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior; heads of local councils; and citizens of Nazareth. Among those present were also representatives of Christian confessions and religious communities, including Sheikh Imam Dia Abu Ahmad, Sheikh Mowafak Tarif, leader of the Druze community of Israel; and Bishop Giacinto-Boulos Marcuzzo, vicar of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem for Israel (Latin Patriarchal *Vicar for Israel*).

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrated a prayer service at the Church of the Annunciation. After the service, he addressed Metropolitan Kyriakos and all those present, saying in particular:

"I am deeply touched by your warm hospitality. I have seen light and joy in the eyes of people here. These feelings come from you hearts. I cordially thank you for this and for our common prayer..."

"I wholeheartedly wish prosperity to this city and to the holy metropolia of Nazareth. I wish good health and God's help to Your Eminence, clergymen, representatives of city authorities and to all people. I am glad that representatives of other Christian Churches have come to meet with me. Indeed, this place, where our world has received the Gospel of salvation, should be the place of peace, love and mutual understanding."

Mr. Ramiz Jaraisy, Mayor of Nazareth, greeted the Primate of the Russian Church, saying: "Relations between Russia and Palestine have existed for many centuries. Russian pilgrims have contributed to the development of these relations by establishing religious, cultural and scientific institutions throughout the Holy Land and in Nazareth in particular." The Mayor thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for visiting this city.

Having reminded all those present of close relations between the Russian Church, Russia and Nazareth, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said, "There are some unsolved problems in Israel-Palestine relations, but I believe that a solution will be found." The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted that the issues of reconciling the dispute had been discussed at the meeting with H.E. Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority, and said that "Nazareth is a remarkable example of peaceful coexistence between people of different nationalities and religions."

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