



Primate of Russian Orthodox Church visits Basilica of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem

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On 10 November 2012, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church visited the Basilica of the Nativity of Christ in Bethlehem. Meeting His Holiness and the delegation, accompanying him on his visit, were Archbishop Theophylactos of Jordan, Patriarchal Commissioner to Bethlehem; Mr. Alexander Rudakov, Russia's representative to the Palestinian National Authority; Mr. *Victor* Batarseh, mayor of Bethlehem; representatives of the Palestinian National Authority and Bethlehem mayor's office, clergymen of various confessions, citizens of Bethlehem, and pilgrims.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrated a prayer service at the Church of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

After that the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with Mr. Viktor Batarseh, mayor of Bethlehem, at the Monastery of the Nativity of Christ. Mr. Batarseh emphasized the great importance of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's visit for the Christian population of this land in overcoming hostility and separation in this region.

In the square before the Basilica, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said to the mass media representatives:

“While in Bethlehem, where our Saviour was born, we were praying for our country, for the whole historical Russia, for its spiritual unity, for the unity and spiritual strength of our Church...

We were also praying for the settlement of the situation in the Middle East, for the Holy Land to be the place of peace, justice and close interaction of people belonging to different religions... I believe that God will be merciful... to Russia, to the Middle East countries, and especially to the sacred land of Palestine.”