Patriarch Kirill concludes his primatial visit to Japan

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia concluded his primatial visit to Japan on September 18, 2012. His visit was timed to the centenary of the demise of St. Nicholas of Japan.

His Holiness was seen off at the airport by Metropolitan Daniel of Tokyo and All Japan, Archbishop Seraphim of Sendai, clergy of the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church, Archpriest Nikolay Katsuban, dean of the Tokyo Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Russian Ambassador to Tokyo Ye. Afanasyev.

The Patriarchal visit to the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church began on September 14 with a visit to Hakodate in which St. Nicholas began his mission in Japan.

The official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church included Metropolitan Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations; Archbishop Varfolomey of Rovno and Ostrog, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat; Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Mr. V. Legoida, head of the Synodal information department, Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman; and Mr. M. Kuksov, acting director of the Patriarchal personal secretariat.

From the airport Patriarch Kirill proceeded to the Church of the Resurrection in Hakodate, the first Orthodox church to appear in Japan. In the church, His Holiness led the congregation in a thanksgiving to St. Nicholas Equal-to-the-Apostles.

Later that day, His Holiness came to the graves of compatriots buried at the Foreign Cemetery in

Hakodate. He said the Office for the Dead at the commemorative cross erected in the Russian part of the cemetery.

On September 15, Patriarch Kirill arrived in Sendai at Honshu Island north of Tokyo. In the Church of the Annunciation, the cathedral of the Sendai diocese, he celebrated a thanksgiving to St. Nicholas of Japan. He gave the rectors of parishes in the Sendai diocese, who were affected by the last year's earthquake and tsunami, certificates for gratis obtaining church vessels produced by the Sofrino art production workshop.

His Holiness visited the Arahama district in Sendai on the Pacific coast. This area was flooded by tsunami on March 11, 2011 and many locals were lost in the flood. He said the Office for the Dead at the memorial to the victims and laid flowers at it. Then he walked to the coast from which the destructive wave came a year and a half ago. Archpriest Ioann Nagaya of the ROC Tokyo Representation told His Holiness about the destructions in that place.

On the same day, His Holiness met with Sendai Mayor Ms. Emiko Okuyama.

On September 16, Patriarch Kirill celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tokyo. He was assisted by Metropolitan Daniel of Tokyo and All Japan and an assembly of archpastors.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, considering the great importance the feat of the holy enlightener of Japan has had in the history of Orthodoxy, has resolved that an Order of St. Nicholas Equal-to-the-Apostles be established. Metropolitan Daniel has been the first person to be awarded this Order of the First Degree. Archbishop Seraphim has been awarded the Order of St. Nicholas of Japan, Second Degree. A number of Japanese clergy and laity have been awarded Orders and Medals as well.

Patriarch Kirill said a thanksgiving at the grave of St. Nicholas of Japan at the Yanaka Cemetery in Tokyo. Then His Holiness celebrated a requiem service for the Orthodox bishops buried there.

Patriarch Kirill visited the Tokyo Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky he led a thanksgiving to the holy Prince Alexander.

On September 16 in Tokyo, there was a presentation of the Japanese version of Patriarch Kirill's books 'Freedom and Responsibility: In a Search for Harmony. Human Rights and Dignity', and 'An Eternal Fight…' The versions were prepared and published by the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations with the support of the Metropol Group. The edition was given as a charitable gift to the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church, and the returns from its selling will be used to restore Orthodox churches damaged by the March 2011 natural disaster.

In the evening of that day, a reception in honour of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill was given by the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church at Okura restaurant in Tokyo.

On September 18, the last day of his visit, Patriarch Kirill met with Russian Ambassador Ye. Afanasyev. With his blessing, Metropolitan Hilarion presented awards to several staff members of the embassy who helped organize His Holiness's visit and who give support to the Japanese Orthodox Church.

Patriarch Kirill also decorated several Orthodox lay people who participated in the translation of his books into Japanese.

Later that day, His Holiness Kirill met with Japan's Prime Minister Yeshihiko Noda.

In conclusion of his visit Patriarch Kirill met with Emperor Akihito of Japan.

Patriarch Kirill summed up his visit in a briefing he gave to the mass media reporters at New Otani Hotel in Tokyo.

DECR Communication Service

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