



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with First Hierarch of Russian Church Abroad and members of the working group for discussion the issues of strengthening church unity**

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On 20 May 2012, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, hierarchs and clerics of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) and with members of the working group for discussing issues of strengthening church unity.

Taking part in the meeting that took place at the hall of the Supreme Church Council of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, first deputy President of the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops; Archbishop Feofan of Berlin and Germany; Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in the USA; Archbishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe; Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, head of Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad; Archbishop Innokentiy of Vilnius and Lithuania; Archbishop Yevgeny of Vereya, chairman of the Education Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church; archimandrite Savva (Tutunov), deputy chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; archpriest Alexander Lebedeff, secretary for inter-Orthodox relations of the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; archpriest Serafim Gan, chancellor of the Synod of Bishops and personal secretary of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia; and archpriest Andrew Phillips, member of the Spiritual Court of the Berlin and Western Europe diocese.

In his address at the opening, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill underscored that five years that had passed since the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion between the Moscow Patriarchate and the ROCOR, were very important for the Church. Many people, who thought the reunification to be a certain dangerous experiment, have believed in unity, and "today we can say that it is not an experiment, but the real life of our Church," His Holiness said.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church drew attention of the audience to the fact that during the last five years the Russian Church has refrained from any hasty steps in the matter of deepening the

achieved unity.

As to those who has not accepted the unity and are still separated, His Holiness stated that there were a small number of them in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church, yet it remains a problem and causes pain. He emphasized that the Russian Church is willing to do anything possible to help settle the problem thus alleviating the pain.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for consideration shown to the problems of the Russian Abroad. He confirmed that the separated communities constitute a small part of the ROCOR.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, presented a report on the activities of the working group for discussion of the issues of strengthening church unity, noting the constructive and kind nature of the work.

The participants in the meeting exchanged views on the ways to further consolidation if the Russian Orthodox diaspora.

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