Celebrations to mark 5th anniversary of reunification between Russian Church Outside Russia and Moscow Patriarchate take place in New York

The 17th of May, 2012, marked the fifth anniversary of the Act of Canonical Communion between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Outside of Russia. On that auspicious day, Archbishop Justinian of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA celebrated the Divine Liturgy at St. Nicholas's in New York. Among his concelebrants were Bishops George of Mayfield and Jerome of Manhattan, vicars of the Diocese of Eastern America of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, as well an assembly of clergy of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA and the Russian Church Outside Russia.

Present in the church were Russian Consul General in New York A. Yumashev, members of the Ataman Council of the Cossack Congress in America, Ms O. Zatsepina, president of the Heritage Russian-American Center, and numerous lay people of the Russian Church's parishes in the USA.

During the liturgy, special prayers of thanksgiving were lifted up for the Lord's great mercy expressed in the signing of the Act of restoration of canonical communion within the Local Russian Orthodox Church. The archpastors, clergy and lay people commemorated the late Patriarch Alexy II and Metropolitan Laurus who had signed the Act.

Father Nikodim (Balyasnikov) read out a Message from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Archpastors, Pastors, Deacons, Monastics and All the Faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Act of Canonical Communion.

After the liturgy Archbishop Justinian addressed the congregation. He stressed in particular that 'for Christians it should be characteristic to love one another and to seek unity. For through this people can see how Christian we are'.

'Today we hold dear the fact that to honour the first jubilee, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion have given their blessing upon our celebration of the Liturgy in this old and prayerful cathedral. Yesterday we said the Office for the Dead at the grave of Metropolitan Laurus, and our hearts rejoiced with not noisy but quiet joy over our being together, for God has no dead', he said.

Mr. Yumashev congratulated the clergy and laity, saying in particular, 'The 5th anniversary of the reunification between the Russian Church Outside Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate, which we celebrated today, can be rightly described as historic. It is of epoch-making importance not only for the spiritual children of the Russian Orthodox Church but also for our whole Motherland… Today's celebration would be impossible if the clergy and faithful of the Russian Church both inside and outside Russia had not found strength, wisdom and mutual love to restore canonical unity'.

The service was concluded with the singing of 'Many Years of Life' to Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia, to the bishops, priests and the faithful of the Russian Church who are in Russia and in diaspora.

The festive fellowship continued at the reception given at the refectory of St. Nicholas's, the website of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA has reported.

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