Seminar on consolidation of expatriates

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A practice-orientated seminar on ‘Consolidation of Expatriates as a Strategic Task of the Church, State and Society’ took place on January 25, 2012, at the Moscow Patriarchate’s department for external church relations.

Organized as part of the 20th International Christmas Readings, the seminar was co-chaired by Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad, and V, Istratov, first executive director deputy of the Russian World Foundation’s Board.

Among the participants were A. Chepurin, director of the Foreign Ministry’s department for work with expatriates, V. Pugachev, deputy head of the Federal Agency for Expatriates and International Humanitarian Cooperation’s office for work with expatriates and non-governmental organizations, V. Moskvin, director of the Solzhenitsyn House of the Russian Abroad, Fr. Roman Kiselev of the DECR secretariat for the far abroad, and clergy and laity from Denmark, Italy, Portugal, France, Kazakhstan, Estonia and other countries, who came to Moscow for the Christmas Readings.

The participants considered the experience of pastoral, legal and social concern for expatriates, the efforts of church, state and society structures to consolidate and support expatriates and problems they encounter in this sphere. They heard reports by the co-chairmen and participants and held a fruitful discussion.

In his report, Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev spoke about problems hampering the building of a cohesive diaspora and ways of consolidating expatriates. He said in particular that ‘expatriates can be united on the foundation of religious tradition, culture, mother tongue and the historical memory of the people – all that ties one with one’s motherland and ancestry, which helps one to feel oneself and one’s mentality’. He also spoke about the work carried out by the Russian Church’s institutions abroad to support and consolidate expatriates.

Mr. Istratov related how the Russian World Foundation was created and what kind of work it carried out. Among the basic components of its work is to offer grants to various projects which propagate the Russian language and culture. He pointed to the positive experience of cooperation between the Church and the foundation.

Speaking about the work the Foreign Ministry carried out to help consolidate the Russian diaspora, Mr.

Chepurin pointed to the importance of participation of the Russian Orthodox Church representatives in coordinating bodies set up by expatriates in various countries. He also noted the positive role the Russian Church played in consolidating expatriates and said that the Foreign Ministry and diplomatic embassies will continue to help her in these efforts.

Mr. Pugachev reported on the work carried out by his agency to support expatriates. He said that the Russian Government recently charged his agency with monitoring the condition of expatriates' burial places abroad. He also made a progress report on the restoration work carried out by Russian Centers of Science and Culture at Russian cemeteries.

Mr. Moskvin spoke of the work of the Solzhenitsyn House of the Russian Abroad, a major center in Russia engaged in studying the legacy of the Russian émigrés. The House launched a project for studying the history of parishes abroad and systematizing their archives. It is also planned to prepare photographical and interactive expositions about the life of Russian parishes.

Among those who spoke on the parish work to offer pastoral care to expatriates were Fr. Arseny (Sokolov), rector of the Parish of All Saints in Lisbon, Fr. Ambrose (Makar), rector of the Parish of St. Ambrose of Milan in Milan, Rev. Sergiy Bondarev, rector of the Parish of the Holy Prince Alexander Nevsky in Copenhagen, Fr. Joseph (Pavlinchuk), sacristan of the church of the Three Hierarchs in Paris, and Mr. Paart, a member of the delegation of the Estonian Orthodox Church, and Mr. A. Kosichko, head of the department of philosophy, culture and religion, Kazakhstan Academy of Sciences.

DECR Communication Service

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