



Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros have a brotherly talk

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On 24 January 2012, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros II of Alexandria and All Africa at the Patriarchal residence in St. Daniel's Monastery. The Primate of the Church of Alexandria arrived in Moscow at the invitation of His Holiness to receive the prize "For the Outstanding Activity in Strengthening Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations and for Consolidation and Promotion of Christian Values in the Life of Society" named after His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II.

Taking part in the meeting were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrenaika, representative of the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; archimandrite Panteleimon (Arathymos), secretary general of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Alexandria; archimandrite Leonid (Gorbachev) representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; and Rev. Mikhail Asmus, a DECR staff member.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church warmly greeted His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros, noting that the awarding is a momentous event. "You are caring as no one else for Orthodox Christians in fifty-four countries of Africa, thus consolidating unity of the Orthodox Church on the large African continent. You are making an important contribution to the unity of Orthodoxy as Primate of the Church of Alexandria, which has come from St Mark and is playing an important part in Orthodox affairs as it did in olden times," His Holiness said.

He called relations between the two Churches "traditionally good and fraternal" and added that Patriarchs of Alexandria had been involved in momentous events in the life of the Russian Church. For instance, Patriarch Meletios Pegas, a deeply spiritual man of action and mighty intellect, played an important part in the establishment of the Patriarchate in Russia and extended substantive support to the first Patriarch of Moscow and to the Russian state. "It mattered a good deal to Russia as it was necessary to rely on the generally recognized Orthodox spiritual authorities; Patriarch of the Eastern Churches enjoyed prestige with Russian people," His Holiness underscored.

Patriarch Kirill mentioned many bright events in relations between the two Churches which have always supported each other. "This is a part of our common Tradition," he said and added: "The Russian Church will extend support to the Patriarchate of Alexandria by all available means defending the rights

and freedoms of Christian minorities” at this hard time of oppression against Christians in Northern Africa.

Patriarch Kirill believes that the Representations of the Moscow Patriarchate in Cairo and of the Patriarchate of Alexandria in Moscow play an important part in the development of bilateral relations: “They symbolize the living linkage between our Churches.” His Holiness assured Patriarch Theodoros that he was always happy to meet him. Having noted that after his visit to Moscow His Beatitude will visit fourteen African countries, he wished him God’s help in his missionary endeavours.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for brotherly talk and added: “It is my fourth visit to Moscow in the eight years of my being Patriarch. This displays my respect for the Russian Church.” He said that he had warm recollections of his time spent in Russia, and the years of 1985-90 in particular, which he served in Odessa as Exarch of the Patriarch of Alexandria.

Patriarch Theodoros shared recollections of his meeting with Patriarch Kirill in Mozambique during his missionary visit to the country and said: “When I leave this world, I want people to remember me as a missionary Patriarch.”

He remarked that he would visit the King of Morocco on March 25 and then go to other African countries. “I will bring love there and remember that the Patriarch of All Russia is always with me.”

Also discussed were bilateral relations, pan-Orthodox cooperation, pastoral care for Russian Orthodox Christians living in African countries, and missionary work of the Church of Alexandria.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill described recent events in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, including the establishment of new dioceses. His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros spoke of the three new dioceses of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and of missionary achievements in the tropical Africa.