Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church visits Balamand Monastery in Lebanon

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On 15 November 2011, the last day of his official visit to the Patriarchate of Antioch, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visited the Balamand Monastery of the Dormition of Our Lady.

Meeting the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church at the monastery's gates were many children and adults, brethren of the monastery and students of the Institute of Theology with banners in Russian, 'Welcome' and 'Balamand family welcomes the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.'

His Holiness, vested in a mantle, proceeded to the church. His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV of the Great Antioch and All the East greeted him at the porch and led him to the patriarchal place.

A prayer service was celebrated, after which the rector of the Institute of Theology greeted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church thanked him and delivered a short homily, saying that it is his third visit to the University of Balamand. 'I see that the seed planted by His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius has borne a rich fruit.

'Political situation in the country and conditions for life and work were rather difficult, and one should have had great courage and prophetic vision to set up an institute of theology that has become an important intellectual phenomenon of the life of Lebanon. The Orthodox Church as a whole highly appreciates this deed of His Beatitude and of all those who have been with him. You are doing a great job very important for Lebanon and for Orthodoxy as a whole. The theological school functioning in the Patriarchate of Antioch gives a good example of combining church tradition of piety and faith with the development of intellectual knowledge thus giving an intelligent support to the mission of the Church.

'The world is becoming even more rationalistic; no phenomenon is understood unless it has an intellectual support. This also concerns church sermon and her witness about Christ. Logic and intellectual persuasion are extremely meaningful for contemporary society, and clergymen should have higher education and be of modern type of people, because the primary task of the Church is to actualize all that which Christ has said and done for the salvation of humanity.

'I wholeheartedly wish you God's help. Remember that Christ's message should live in human hearts

through your words. Faith will flame in people if they accept everything the Church tells them.’

His Holiness donated 50 thousand dollars to the Institute of Theology, in which fifty students are studying, and proceeded to the University of Balamand.

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