



## **Patriarch Kirill receives hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Antioch**

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On July 25, 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia received some hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Antioch at his working residence in Chisty Pereulok, Moscow. Present at the meeting were Metropolitan Anthony of Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and Venezuela, Metropolitan Damaskinos of Sao Paulo and All Brazil, Metropolitan George of Homs, and Archbishop Niphon of Philippiopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow.

Participating in the meeting were also Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, and Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR secretariat for inter-Orthodox relations.

Welcoming the guests, Patriarch Kirill noted that in Latin American countries a special pastoral role and responsibility is placed on the Patriarchate of Antioch. 'The greatest number of Orthodox Christians there belongs to your Church. You have the largest parishes and the most active parish life, and this places on you a great responsibility before God and history for preserving and broadening Orthodoxy in the Latin American continent', he said.

Patriarch Kirill stressed that there were many faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latin America, among them post-revolutionary emigrants and those who left their homeland as a result of World War II, as well as people who have come to reside in that region in recent times.

Talking with his high guests, His Holiness made a positive assessment of the cooperation between the clergy of the Churches of Russia and Antioch in Latin America and expressed the wish that the fraternal Churches may support each other in the future too, sharing joys and hard moments in their life. 'We should support each other by all means in our bilateral relations and on the pan-Orthodox level', he said.

Metropolitan Anthony thanked His Holiness Kirill for the possibility to meet. He also expressed deep gratitude to the Russian Church for her support of the Orthodox Christians in the Middle East who are experiencing a hard time. He also informed the patriarch about the way in which the Russian-speaking believers living in Mexico are taken care of in his dioceses.

Metropolitan George conveyed greetings from His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatios IV of Antioch and All the East and the Holy Synod of the Church of Antioch. He noted that for Christians in Syria and Lebanon it

was very important to have the support of the Russian Church. He expressed gratitude for the support of the Christian minority in the Middle East. His words of gratitude were shared by Metropolitan Damaskinos.

During their talk, Patriarch Kirill noted that he personally and all the faithful in Russia were concerned for the fate of Christians in the Middle East, which is still uncertain. He cited Iraq in which an external interference in the life of the country led to a destabilization of the situation which affected in the first place the ethnic and religious minorities. Christians in Iraq were subjected to severe persecution, many of them died or had to flee the country. 'May God give that the processes taking place in Arab countries today may not lead to a political chaos and new persecution of Christians', he said. He also underscored that the Russian Church cannot but sympathize with her brothers in the Middle East since she has been closely connected with the Orthodox in the East throughout history.

Metropolitan George in his turn thanked Patriarch Kirill for the stand taken by Russia with regard to possible sanctions to be imposed on Syria.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photos by Patriarchal Press Service*

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