



Celebration of the DECR's 65th anniversary begins with Patriarchal service at St. Daniel's Monastery

On 24 July 2011, the 6th Sunday after Pentecost and the commemoration day of St. Olga, Equal-to-the-Apostles, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of the Holy Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Council in St. Daniel's Stavropegic Monastery.

The Patriarchal service coincided with the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR).

Concelebrating with His Holiness were Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Varsonofiy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; archimandrite Alexiy (Polikarpov) abbot of St. Daniel's Monastery; archpriest Nikolai Balashov and hegumen Philaret (Bulekov) DECR deputy chairmen; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; Rev. Dimitry Sizonenko, acting DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; and ordained DECR staff members.

Praying at the service were hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches who have arrived in Moscow to take part in the celebration, including Metropolitan Emmanuel of France (Patriarchate of Constantinople), Metropolitan Damaskinos of Sao Paulo and All Brazil, Metropolitan Anthony of Mexico, Metropolitan Georges of Homs and Archbishop Nifon of Philippopolis (Orthodox Church of Antioch); Metropolitan Nifon of Târgoviște (Romanian Orthodox Church); Metropolitan Isaiah of Tamasos (Orthodox Church of Cyprus); Metropolitan John of Korça (Albanian Orthodox Church); archimandrite Stephanos (Dispirakis) (Orthodox Church of Jerusalem); archpriest Alexiy Yuschenko (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), and others.

Also attending the service were Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Information Department, and S. Popov, chairman of the State Duma Committee for public associations and religious organizations.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church prayed for the repose of the souls of the late DECR chairmen – Metropolitan Nikolai (Yarushevich) and Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov).

After the Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion greeted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and thanked him for

concelebrating the Liturgy with the former DECR chairmen and for the prayers for his predecessors of the blessed memory. He said, *inter alia*, that the Church of Christ can be likened to a ship sailing along the waves of the sea of life with its captain, navigators, and sailors doing their important job. If the ship loses its contact with the outer world, with the coast and lighthouses, a crash can occur. So, it is very important for the Church to have an institution for relations with the outer world standing guard over church frontiers and promoting and consolidating the inner unity of the Church.

Metropolitan Hilarion presented His Holiness with an icon of St. Peter of Moscow and patriarchal vestments.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill addressed the worshippers, saying that he eagerly celebrated the Divine Liturgy, as he served as DECR chairman for twenty years. "In our work we always encounter many difficulties, including psychological ones, and temptations... I do hope that people, who have doubts about our work, will abandon them, as all words and deeds of the DECR staff do not run counter to the decisions taken by the Bishops' and Local Councils and by the Holy Synod," His Holiness said.

Patriarch Kirill congratulated Metropolitan Hilarion on his 45th birthday and presented him with an inscribed *panagia*.

Archimandrite Alexiy (Polikarpov) greeted the Patriarch and the DECR chairman and staff on behalf of the brethren of St. Daniel's Monastery and presented His Holiness with an icon of the Holy and Right-Believing Prince Daniel of Moscow.

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