Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church meets with Japanese Ambassador to Russia Masaharu Kono

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On 6 April 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with H. E. Masaharu Kono, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Russia. They were joined in the meeting, which took place at the Patriarch's residence in Christy side-street, by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a staff member of the DECR secretariat for inter-Orthodox relations; Hideki Uyama, minister plenipotentiary of the Embassy of Japan to Russia; and Mr. Kodzi Hirohata, third secretary of the Embassy.

His Holiness greeted the guests, saying: "First of all I would like to express my condolences and solidarity with the Japanese people who have suffered from the terrible earthquake that has greatly worried people here who express their sympathies in various ways, including condolences. Many people, including the workers of art, have begun to raise funds for helping victims. You may have heard about charity concerts performed for this purpose. This shows that the Japanese people's pain has echoes in our hearts. I have sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Japan Naoto Kan and to Metropolitan Daniel of Tokyo, Primate of the Autonomous Orthodox Church of Japan."

His Holiness told the guests that several church buildings of the Orthodox Church of Japan had been seriously damaged or even destroyed, particularly in th4e Diocese of Sendai. He added that Russian people have been helping victims of the natural disaster. "Our Church is raising money to help the Orthodox Church of Japan to rebuild the ruined buildings. I would like to say that I admire the courage of Japanese people they are displaying in the time of trial. We pray for the soonest healing of all the wounds," His Holiness said.

Ambassador Masaharu Kono thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for sympathy and good wishes, saying that the earthquake has been a tragedy not only for Japan, but also for the entire world. "Your letter with condolences sent to the Prime Minister right after the earthquake and tsunami has encouraged us," he added and noted that profound and active sympathy of the Russians has greatly impressed him. Thousands are coming to the Embassy of Japan in Moscow, expressing their condolences and bringing money and humanitarian aid for the victims. The ambassador believes that this is rooted in Russian religious culture.

His Holiness agreed with the Japanese diplomat, noting that compassion is a characteristic feature of

Russian psychology. “Orthodoxy has shaped moral values of people living in Russia for centuries. Holiness, rather than success or prosperity has been an ideal in society for many years. – His Holiness underscored. – Our country has been called Holy Rus’ not because our people were saints, but because holiness was an ideal and purpose of life. Therefore, it is very important to uphold traditional moral values challenged by secular society every day.”

The Ambassador of Japan thanked His Holiness for the meeting and noted the importance of spiritual ties between Russian and Japan. He added that playing an important part in their development are the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of Japan, the fruit of missionary labours of St. Nicholas of Japan who began to preach Orthodoxy in Japan one hundred and fifty years ago.

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