



Patriarch Kirill attends reception at Greek embassy on the occasion of Feast of Orthodoxy

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On March 16, 2011, the Greek embassy in Moscow gave a traditional reception on the occasion of the Feast of Orthodoxy. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia attended the celebration.

Along with high-ranking officials of the Russian Orthodox Church, the reception was attended by representatives of traditional religions in Russia.

Among the guests were also statesmen and public figures, government officials and representatives of the Federal Assembly, ambassadors and diplomats.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church was welcomed at the embassy entrance by Greek Ambassador Michael Spinellis.

Before the reception started, His Holiness and His Excellency exchanged tokens. The Greek ambassador presented the patriarch with a souvenir silver ship, while the patriarch gave the ambassador a copy of the unique facsimile edition with works by St. Epiphanius the Wise about St. Sergius of Radonezh and a miniature statue of this abbot of the Russian Land.

In his address to the guests, Mr. Spinellis pointed to the trials that had befallen the Russian and Greek nations during the last year, such as terrorist acts in Moscow and a grave economic crisis in Greece. He said, 'The Orthodox Church is capable of defining the spiritual values which can change our world and our society for the better. We speak about the rejection of violence and love of the neighbor, criticism of the consumerist way of life and acceptance of spiritual values, appreciation of the traits characteristic of each member of society, respect for any faith or ideology which respect human dignity, moral principles and humanistic achievements'.

He recalled that for over a millennium the common Orthodox faith was one of the most important foundations of relations between the two nations. 'In the world shaken by violence and instability with its atmosphere of continual changes and unknown future, our countries rely on the foundation of the Church and Orthodox traditions, which, throughout the past centuries, have faced and overcome difficulties much more tragic than manifestations of violence within a country or economic crises, thus ensuring for our nations survival, stability, welfare and cultural and historical prosperity', he said.

Speaking in response, Patriarch Kirill said in particular,

'Thank you for having pointed in your address to the values which unite our nations and to our common roots. The choice of the time for our meeting at the Greek Embassy is symbolical. In 843, the Council of Constantinople finally approved Orthodoxy and declared the feast we celebrate together today. This day bears witnesses to the victory over a very dangerous heresy, which affected not only the doctrine but also the important domain of the aesthetic dimension of religious life. Suffice it to imagine that if it were not for the triumph of Orthodoxy we would have never had either Theophanes the Greek, or Andrew Rublev, or the vast cultural layer that is reflected in our traditional Orthodox iconography. This shows that heresies can be dangerous not only for human reason but also for the human heart, for the aesthetic feeling. It is sufficient to recall all that happened in Byzantium after the victory over the iconoclastic movement in order to see the great development and true Byzantine renaissance that was brought about by this victory over iconoclasm. The light of this renaissance reached Russia as well to awaken the genius of the Russian people who themselves began to create unique works of ancient art.

Thank you for giving me this small ship which symbolizes the coming of the first Byzantine missionaries to Russia. Among those missionaries was St. Cyril whose name I bear. His mission in Chersonese initiated the Orthodox mission in Old Russia. I thank God for the fact that my episcopal consecration, which took place this day 35 years ago, was performed precisely on the Day of Orthodoxy.

I would like to thank you for remembering on this day the victims of terrorist acts in Moscow. I would like to thank various states, and in your person, other ambassadors present here, who showed solidarity with our people and expressed their support. It is my deep conviction that, despite all the terror of radicalism which has come to killing innocent people, there is still a clear understanding that all these terrorist actions cannot change the movement of history and the movement of our people because everything is certainly based on people's spiritual power.

As we see terrible TV reports coming from Japan today, many of us come to very correct, in my view, worldview conclusions. Japan outruns such countries as Russia for decades from the point of view of technological development and organization of social life. She is a symbol of technological progress. What then do we see today? A tsunami blows off all this scientific and technological civilization just as the Flood did at the time of Noah. What is left? The human being is left. And his future depends on how strong he is in his spirit. Therefore, all our romantic admiration of the movements of reason, of the modern management, of power – political, economic, scientific should be corrected in face of these terrible pictures. The spiritual life of man cannot be put in the periphery of social life. It should be in the center, and it is only relying on this power that we can move forward and win victories, overcoming terrible tragic events experienced by people.

Your country is going through a difficult time, too, a time of deep economic crisis, economic upheavals, and, as the same television reports to us, people have reacted to this crisis in different ways. We pray and hope that the spiritual Orthodox foundation of the Greek nation will prove to be solid enough to build on it a happy and peaceful life of your country.

Today, Northern Africa and the Middle East are also in upheaval. There are a considerable number of Orthodox people living there. They are part of the Orthodox world, and it is a problem not only for the Islamic community. Therefore, I believe the participation of Orthodox countries in overcoming the crises, which have arisen in Northern Africa and the Middle East, should be more pro-active.

It seems to me that in order to ensure a really sustainable and reasonable development of the human civilization it is necessary to strengthen the spiritual foundation of human existence. I mean, of course, the traditional values such as morality, integrity of human personality, family, as well as human dignity, freedom, charity and justice. The Russian Orthodox Church calls to make traditional moral values a keystone of both the internal political social development and international relations. The response to this call vary, as some are willing to participate in the discussion on these problems, while other have not shown any sensitivity to them. Last year, a very important international seminar on Encouragement of Human Rights Through a Better Understanding of the Traditional Values of Humanity was held in the UN in Geneva. We are very much satisfied with the fact of this seminar and the considerable interest shown to it in the world community.

Today, as we gather together in the hospitable Greek Embassy on the occasion of the Feast of Orthodoxy, we express our deep faith in the triumph of truth and justice. Regrettably, this faith is something that the modern man is sometimes lacking. I believe the vocation of Orthodox Churches and Orthodox nations is not to follow the lead of other's ideas but, proceeding from their own spiritual experience, to offer a fresh and attractive paradigm, among other things, for building the social life of people in international relations'.

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Photos by the Patriarchal Press Service