



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill receives H. E. Victor G. Garcia III, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Russian Federation**

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On 18 February 2011, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with H. E. Victor G Garcia III, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Russian Federation. They were joined in the meeting by Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, secretary of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations for far abroad countries, and the first secretary of the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, consul Dinno M. Oblena.

His Holiness the Patriarch greeted the guest, saying: "I would like to express my high appreciation with your mission in Moscow. You are an outstanding representative of diplomatic community and bring a great contribution to the development of relations between Russia and the Philippines."

Ambassador Victor G. Garcia thanked the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church for receiving him and congratulated the Patriarch on the second anniversary of his enthronement. He reminded His Holiness Kirill of his visit to the Philippines in 2002 as Metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad and head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations and his meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Blas F. Ople and other representatives of state authority, Christian confessions and traditional religions.

His Holiness Kirill mentioned the dialogue that Russia and the Philippines maintain, saying that it is a very good dialogue as both countries have strong Christian traditions that exert a real influence on people's life.

Patriarch Kirill noted a complicated situation with religion on the southern islands of the Philippine Archipelago, for instance, the cases of violence against Christians, and expressed his solidarity with the Philippine authorities in their seeking peaceful and good-neighbourly relations among people of different religious traditions. His Holiness spoke about interreligious dialogue in Russia and about the work of the Interreligious Council of Russia. The participants in the meeting shared the understanding of necessity to develop interreligious and intercultural dialogue, also on the international level.

His Holiness reminded Ambassador Victor G. Garcia of the historical presence of the Russian Orthodox

Church in the Philippines and told him about the first migrants from China who settled in the Philippines in the late 1940s. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill added: "We are grateful to the people of the Philippines for giving shelter to our brothers and sisters under difficult circumstances."

Towards the end of the meeting, His Holiness and Ambassador Victor G. Garcia exchanged presents.

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