



## **19th International Educational Christmas Readings begin in Moscow**

The 19<sup>th</sup> International Educational Christmas Readings were opened in a solemn ceremony on January 24, 2011, at the State Kremlin Palace. This year the forum is devoted to the theme 'Church and State: Cooperation in Tackling Common Tasks'. The opening ceremony was led by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Sitting on the panel were Metropolitans Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus; Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the department for external church relations; Clement of Kaluga and Borovsk; Archbishops Yevgeny of Vereya, chairman of the education committee; Philip of Poltava and Mirgorod, head of the mission department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church; Bishops Mercuriy of Zarsk, head of the department for religious education and catechism; Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo, head of the department for church charity and social service; Archpriests Dmitry Smirnov, head of the department for cooperation with the armed forces and law enforcement; Vsevolod Chaplin, head of the department for church-state relations; Mr. V. Legoida, head of the information department; Archpriest Vladimir Shmaliy, pro-rector of the Sts Cyril of Methodius Post-Graduate School; Mr. G. Poltavchenko, presidential envoy for Central Russia; A. Torshin, first deputy chairman of the Federation Council; Ms. L. Slizka, State Duma deputy speaker; S. Lavrov, foreign minister; A. Fursenko, minister of education; A. Avdeyev, minister of culture; V. Ivanov, director of the federal drugs control service; A. Popov, chairman of the State Duma committee for public and religious organizations; A. Nikandrov, president of the Russian Education Academy, and other dignitaries.

Present at the opening were hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, representatives of National Orthodox Churches including the Georgian Orthodox Church, and numerous representatives of governmental bodies and public organizations.

Mr. Poltavchenko read out a message from President Dmitry Medvedev. Messages were brought from

Prime Minister V. Putin, Council of Federation chairman S. Mironov, State Duma chairman B. Gryzlov, Minister of Justice A. Konovalov and Moscow Mayor S. Sobyenin.

The forum was addressed by Mrs. Fursenko, Avdeyev, Lavrov, Ivanov, as well as Bishop Merkury, Metropolitan Juvenaly, Metropolitan Hilarion, Mr. Nikandrov and others.

The participants in the Christmas Reading will work for three days in issue conferences, sections and round tables discussing the following topics:

1. Catechism and the Sacraments of the Church
2. Church and School: Cooperation between Church, State and Non-Governmental Systems of Education
3. Family in Today's World
4. Ways of Divine Providence and Patristic Heritage
5. Church and Society
6. Church and Culture
7. Church and Mass Media
8. Social Service of the Church
9. Christianity and Science
10. Church and Youth Work

The Forum is conducted by the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechism.

*DECR Communication Service*

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