



Patriarch Kirill meets with President of Slovenia

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On November 17, 2010, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the President of the Republic of Slovenia Dr. Danilo Turk, at the patriarchal residence in Chisty Pereulok.

His Holiness Kirill welcomed the guest, saying, 'Dear Mr. President, I am glad of this opportunity to meet you. This year you have already come to the Russian capital for the celebrations which marked the 65th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War, and I think your participation in them was an important contribution to the development of relations between our two nations. And now you have come to Russia for an official visit'.

Patriarch Kirill stressed that in such contacts he as a representative of the Church 'is interested in the first place in the preservation of the Slavic culture and development of spiritual relations between or nations'. He said that both Russia and Slovenia remember the tragedy that happened on the Vrsic Pass. In March 1916, one of the groups of Russian prisoners of war, who were clearing the road of snow blocks, were covered by a huge avalanche which took away several hundred lives. Local Slovenes buried them in a common grave. Later the remains of the Russian prisoners of war were carefully collected and reburied near a Russian chapel. In July 2011, there will be celebrations to mark the 95th anniversary of the chapel erected to commemorate the victims. The Patriarchate of Moscow is ready to participate in this commemoration event. His Holiness said it was significant that the chapel has become now a symbol of spiritual bonds between the two countries.

'Slovenia is a successfully developing country in spite of the difficulties she has had to experience because of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Today the economic and social development of Slovenia shows that she has all the resources necessary for a new stage in her development, and we are glad at it, the patriarch said.

He also stressed that Slovenia's entry in the European Union became a significant event as it gives her an opportunity to enrich Europe with an original culture which was formed in the midst of the Slavic civilization.

'In Slovenia, there are about one thousand people who are linked with Russia. Among them are people of the old and new emigration who entered mixed marriages. Most of them are Orthodox people who come to churches belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church', the patriarch reminded his guest.

His Holiness noted with satisfaction that people in Slovenia are still interested in the Russian language. 'There is a good human and cultural potential for our relations to become even more intensive. We can feel a special community of our nations and we are interested in all kinds of joint cultural projects, since such relations bring our nations closer together', the patriarch said, noting that the Russian Orthodox Church will promote further development of these relations.

The President of Slovenia in his response pointed to the common spiritual and cultural roots uniting Russia and Slovenia. 'The first documents in the Slovenian language, the so-called Freising Manuscripts made a beginning of our Christian life. After their publication in 1820 in Russia, they became known to the whole world', he said. It shows that there has always been an interest in the uniting of the Slavic nations, Dr. Turk noted.

As a token of the meeting, the head of the Slovenian state presented Patriarch Kirill with a book on the Russian chapel on the Vrsic Pass and a photo album with pictures of all the events that have been held held at the chapel since 1992.

Patriarch Kirill presented Dr. Turk with an icon of the Mother of God, a book on the Russian Orthodox Church and his book 'A Pastor's Word'.

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