Festive reception in honour of the Russian Orthodox Church delegation is held at the Russian Federation Embassy in Tokyo

On 12 October 2010, a festive reception in honour of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church took place at Embassy of the Russian Federation in Tokyo.

The delegation, led by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, visited Japan with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to take part in the celebration of the 40th anniversary of canonization of St. Nicholas of Japan, Equal-to-the-Apostles and the autonomous status of the Orthodox Church of Japan.

Attending the reception were Metropolitan Daniel of All Japan, the ambassadors of Ukraine, Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia; a diplomatic representative of the Republic of Belarus in Japan, chairman of the "Japan-Russia" Society Hatoyama Kuniko, and other representatives of public and political elite.

The Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to Japan M. Beliy greeted the guests and underscored the importance of a visit of the high-level church delegation from Moscow for the strengthening of friendly relations between the two neighboring countries.

Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the audience with the following words:

> "Dear Mikhail Mikhailovich!
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> Your Eminence Metropolitan Daniel!
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> Dear guests!
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> The delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church is here in connection with several important

dates. Forty years ago remarkable events took place in the life of Orthodoxy in Japan: canonization of St. Nicholas of Japan, Equal-to-the-Apostles, the founder of the Japanese Church; granting of the autonomous status to the Orthodox Church of Japan, and the establishment of the Metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Tokyo.

St. Nicholas came to this country as a hieromonk when he was twenty-four. He began his ministry at the Russian Embassy, but his influence was spreading and growing among the native population. Pavel Nakai, a Japanese, was his close associate. It was with his help that St. Nicholas translated the Holy Scripture and liturgical books into Japanese.

When St. Nicholas came to Japan, there were no Orthodox people at all here. When he died fifty years later, there were thirty thousand Orthodox Christians and two hundred churches in the country. Since then the Orthodox Church of Japan has been an integral part of the Moscow Patriarchate as it came into being through Russian missionaries. At the same time it is a national Orthodox Church of Japan serving in which are Japanese priests, and divine services being celebrated in the Japanese language.

This distinctive status of the Orthodox Church of Japan was recognized forty years ago by granting the Tomos of autonomy, i.e. self-governance. This status gives the Japanese Church an opportunity to have administrative and financial independence and to keep spiritual ties with its mother – the Russian Orthodox Church. The Metochion is a kind of church embassy.

We have gathered now at the Embassy of the Russian Federation. Our Metochion is the embassy of the Russian Orthodox Church, which unites the believers not only of Russia, but also of Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and other countries on the post-Soviet territory, as well as of Japan and China.

I would like to cordially greet you, dear Metropolitan Daniel and all the guests, including representatives of the state. The ambassadors of Ukraine, Greece, and Serbia, and representatives of other courtiers. I wish God's help to all of you and invoke God's blessing upon you."

Metropolitan Daniel also greeted the guests, saying, "We are celebrating the 4oth anniversary of the establishment of the Metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Japan, and the beginning of the Orthodox Church of Japan as an autonomous church. Many important events have happened during these years."

The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Japan noted good relations with the Russian diplomatic

representation in Tokyo and underscored: "Many ambassadors have served here during forty years, and I am happy to be invited to the festive reception as before… Any time I come to the Russian Embassy, I feel a warm atmosphere here. I believe that the same atmosphere is the hearts all people who come here."

"The Lord teaches us that the Russians and the Japanese, as all people on the earth, are brothers. Let us go forward together being united by love," said Metropolitan Daniel in conclusion.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/56575/