



Holy Synod takes decisions on external church affairs

On 31 May 2010, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia chaired a regular session of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church held at the historical building of the Sacred Governing Synod in St. Petersburg.

Taking part in the session were permanent members of the Holy Synod: Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, Patriarchal Exarch of All Belarus Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and All Moldova, Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Varsonofiy of Saransk and Mordovia, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate' Department for External Church Relations Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, and invited to the session Metropolitan Agafangel of Odessa and Izmail, Archbishops Lev of Novgorod and Staraya Russa, Ionafan of Abakan and Kyzyl, Yelisei of Sourozh, and Bishop Markell of Beltsy and Feleshty.

Decisions were taken on the life of the Russian Orthodox Church, including external affairs.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill recounted the visit of His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople to the Russian Orthodox Church on 22-31 May, 2010 (Minutes 31). The participants in the meeting thanked the Lord for the joy of concelebration and brotherly communion of His Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople – the New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and acknowledged the importance of the visit for the strengthening of inter-Orthodox unity and fraternal ties between the two Churches. Satisfaction was expressed at the contents and outcome of the talks between the Primate of the Orthodox Churches of Constantinople and Russia.

Having heard a report of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church on his official visit to the Patriarchate of Alexandria on 10-12 April, 2010 (Minutes 32), members of the Holy Synod thanked the Lord for the joy of concelebration and brotherly communion of His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch

Theodoros of Alexandria and All Africa with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and expressed satisfaction at the contents and outcome of the talks between the Primates of the Orthodox Churches of Alexandria and Russia. They thanked His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros for hospitality extended to the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church. The meetings of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia with religious and secular leaders of Egypt were considered as helpful.

An official visit of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church to the Republic of Armenia took place on 16-18 March, 2010 (Minutes 34). Having taken note of the report of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the participants in the meeting approved the results and underscored the importance of the meetings during the visit for the strengthening of fraternal ties between the Churches and people. Satisfaction was expressed at the meeting of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with the Armenian President S. Sargsian. Members of the Holy Synod thanked the President for warm hospitality, his attention to the needs of the Orthodox, and care for the interreligious peace. Gratitude was expressed to the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II for fraternal hospitality. The decoration of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church with the highest award of the Armenian Apostolic Church – the Order of St. Gregory the Illuminator was noted as a testimony to the high level of relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Armenian Apostolic Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill recounted his visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan on 24-26 April, 2010 (Minutes 35). On these days, Baku hosted meetings of the Interreligious Council of the CIS, and the World Summit of Religious Leaders (Minutes 36).

Having noted the importance of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan, the participants in the session expressed satisfaction at the results of the meeting of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, thanked him for hospitality, attention to the needs of the Orthodox, and care for interreligious peace, thanked the chairman of the Muslim Board of the Caucasus Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshuqur Pasha-zade for attention accorded during the visit, thanked Bishop Alexander of Baku and Caspian region, clergymen, monks and laymen of the Baku and Caspian region diocese, as well as to the high representatives of the authorities who have prepared and carried out Patriarch Kirill's visit to Azerbaijan. Highly appreciated was the decoration of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church with the state award of Azerbaijan as a testimony to good cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the state authorities of Azerbaijan.

The trilateral meeting of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia with His Holiness Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians Karekin II and the chairman of the Muslim Board of the Caucasus Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshuqur Pasha-zade took place in the framework of the World Summit of Religious Leaders. The talks of the spiritual leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia mediated by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church continued a piece dialogue that has begun in 1988. The

participants signed a joint statement on the role of religious leaders in the achievement of peace with justice and accord between the Armenian and Azerbaijani people.

That same day His Holiness Patriarch Kirill opened a meeting of the High-Level Religious Leaders Group in partnership with UNESCO discussed at which was a mechanism of dialogue between religious leaders and UNESCO.

Participants in the session of the Holy Synod expressed satisfaction at the World Summit of Religious Leaders in Baku, acknowledged its final document Summit, and approved proposals on religious dimension in the work of the High-Level Group on "Peace and Dialogue of Cultures." It was resolved to continue the elaboration of a mechanism of dialogue of traditional religious associations with UNESCO. Gratitude was expressed to the CIS Interreligious Council, the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, the Synodal Department for Church-State relations, the Baku and Caspian region diocese, and the Caucasus Muslim Board for the preparation and carrying out of the Summit, and to the state authorities of Azerbaijan for versatile assistance rendered to the forum.

Having heard the by Archbishop Innokenty of Korsun to appoint a vicar to the Korsun diocese (Minutes 44), the participants in the session decided to elect hegumen Nestor (Sirotenko), rector of the Church of Three Hierarchs in Paris, a vicar of the Korsun diocese, to elevate him to the rank of archimandrite, and to nominate and consecrate him in Moscow.

The Holy Synod resolved to elect archpriest Arkady Shatov, chairman of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Ministry, as vicar of the Moscow diocese with the title of Bishop of Orekhovo-Zuevo (Minutes 41); archimandrite Veniamin (Likhomanov), dean of the Tutayev district of the Yaroslavl diocese, as vicar of the Yaroslavl diocese with the title of Bishop of Rybinsk (Minutes 42); archimandrite Gennady (Gogolev), rector of the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Alma-Ata – a vicar of the Astanai diocese with the title of Bishop of Kaskelen (Minutes 43).

Members of the Holy Synod heard the report of Metropolitan Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, on the Episcopal Conferences in diaspora. The Fourth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Council Conference that took place in Chambesy in June 2009 resolved to hold Episcopal Conference in diaspora. The Holy Synod at its session on 27 July 2009 (Minutes 66) expressed satisfaction with the constructive nature of the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Conference that has contributed to the strengthening of pan-Orthodox cooperation. So far, Episcopal Conferences of South America, and of North and Central America took place on 15-18 April 2010 and on 26-28 May 2010 respectively.

The Holy Synod expressed satisfaction with the work of Episcopal Conference in diaspora and

approved the position of the Moscow Patriarchate's representatives at the conferences. The importance of the participation of all canonical Orthodox jurisdictions in the work of these conferences was noted.

The DECR Chairman reported on his visit to Italy on 14-21 May, 2010, his meetings with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Days of Russian spiritual culture in the Vatican. The concert of Russian spiritual music was

Performed, attending which were the Pope of Rome Benedict XVI, the cardinals and diplomats accredited at the Holy See, as well as many guests from different countries of the world (Minutes 51).

Members of the expressed satisfaction over Metropolitan Hilarion's visit to Italy and approved the position of the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church at their meetings with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church.

A pilgrimage to the Holy Mount Athos for the feast day of the Holy Great Martyr and Healer Panteleimon celebrated on July 27/August 9 was discussed. It was decided to send the group of pilgrims consisting of Archbishop Aleksey of Galich and Kostroma – head of the group, Archbishop Guriy of Novogradok and Lida, Bishop Agapit of Severodonetsk and Starobelsk, and Rev. Mikhail Asmus, a DECR staff member (Minutes 52).

Metropolitan Hilarion reported on the preparation for a regular session of the Joint "Orthodoxy-Islam" Russian-Iranian commission for dialogue due to take place on October 5-7, 2010, on "The Role of Religion in the Life of People and Society" (Minutes 53).

This Commission was set up in 1997 and held its meetings in Tehran (1997, 2006) and in Moscow (1999, 2001, 2004, and 2008). The agenda includes issues of the role and place of religion in the modern world, dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions, globalization, problems of terrorism and extremism, spiritual and moral crisis in society, and certain questions of Christian and Islamic theology and anthropology.

The Holy Synod confirmed the delegation to the Seventh session of the Commission. The delegation includes Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazma – head of the delegation; hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh), DECR deputy chairman; hegumen Aleksandr (Zarkeshev), rector of St. Nicholas' Cathedral in Tehran; Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for far abroad countries; Prof. Alexei Osipov of the Moscow Theological Academy; and D. Safonov, an instructor of the Moscow Theological Academy.

A number of decisions was taken on the report of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the dioceses and parishes abroad (Minutes 57). Rev. Sergiy Yurin, a cleric of the Laura of the Holy Trinity and St.

Sergius, and a supernumerary cleric of the Maikop diocese archpriest Pyotr Gaiduk are placed at the disposal of Metropolitan Platon of Argentina and South America to minister in the Argentina and South America diocese. Archpriest Aleksiy Galun, a cleric of the Korsun diocese is relieved, in compliance with his petition, of his duties of rector of the Church of St. Sabbas the Blessed in Cagliari on Sardinia and placed at the disposal of His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine. Archpriest Vladimir Aleksandrov is relieved of his duties of rector of St. Sergius' Church in Stockholm and placed at the disposal of His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Rev. Vitaly Babushin of the Moscow diocese is appointed rector of St. Sergius' Church in Stockholm.

By the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church the following newly established parishes are included in the Sourozh diocese: St. Kentingern in Glasgow (Scotland; Great Britain); St. Luke in Tanbridge-Wales (Kent, Great Britain); St. Patrick of Ireland in Waterford (Ireland); St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Galway (Ireland); the Holy Trinity in Cork (Ireland); St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess near Bodiam (East Sussex, Great Britain); St. Finnnian of Clonard in Belfast (Northern Ireland, Great Britain); King Edward the Martyr in Wimborn (Dorset, Great Britain); Ss. Imperial Passion-Bearers in Douglas on the Isle of Man; the Nativity of Christ in Kingston upon Hall (North Humberside, Great Britain); the Holy Martyrs Grand Duchess Elizabeth and nun Barbara in Newton Abbot (Devon, Great Britain); St. Silouan of Athos in Southampton (Hampshire, Great Britain); St. Andrew the-First-Called in Romford (Essex, Great Britain); St. Macarius of Aberdeen in Aberdeen (Scotland, Great Britain); the Annunciation of the Mother of God in Dundee (Scotland, Great Britain); St. Teneva of Scotland in Edinburgh (Scotland, Great Britain); St. George the Victorious in Newcastle upon Tyne (Tyne and Wear, Great Britain); and All Saints of Britain (West Midlands, Great Britain).

Blessing was given to Rev. Vasily Urderianu of the Kishinev diocese to join the Athens Archdiocese of the Greek Orthodox Church in compliance with the request of His Beatitude Archbishop Hieronymos of Athens and All Greece (Minutes 59).

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