



Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople lifts up prayer at St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura

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In the evening of May 29, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople arrived at St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura of the Holy Trinity. He and his delegation were met at the monastery's Cathedral of the Trinity by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and an assembly of bishops.

The abbot of the monastery, Bishop Nazariy of Vyborg, addressed Patriarch Bartholomew, saying,

“Your Holiness, I would like to thank you with all my heart on behalf of the monastic community of St. Alexander Nevsky's Laura for you coming to this magnificent cathedral to venerate our shrines. We cordially thank you for having allocated in your heavy program a place for this church and for this monastery. I wish very much that, leaving this place, Your Holiness may have a token of your visit to this monastery”.

Bishop Nazariy presented His Holiness Bartholomew with a copy of the miracle-working Icon of Our Lady Quick to Hearken with a request to remember in his prayers the brethren of the monastery who perform the feat of monastic life, living in the center of a large city.

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew addressed those who assembled in the church, saying,

“My Right Reverend Brother, Bishop of Vyborg, thank you for the warm welcome to your laura. I am also delighted and moved by the fact that I am here, in this beautiful church, together with my honorable fellow-travelers. I am particularly glad for being here together with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill as guests of his native city where he was born. You, people in St. Petersburg, have the right to be proud of your Patriarch because these days we have been his guests and because neither he nor his staff have spared any effort to give us, guests from Constantinople, a worthy welcome.

“Once again we express our joy and gratitude to Your Holiness. And tomorrow we will complete our visit with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at St. Isaac's, the more so that tomorrow the memory of this saint is celebrated. And the day after tomorrow, on Monday, we are ‘to go back where we come from’, to Constantinople, with excellent memories of this visit.

We thank fellow-archpastors who have assembled here to meet us. We bless the people of God, especially the brethren of the Laura, as well as the teachers and students who are within the Laura's

walls. In this academy, one should mention, our Father Vissarion, the Chief Preacher of the Church of Constantinople, had studied for three years thanks to a scholarship granted him by the ever memorable Patriarch Alexy. In a while we will move to the cemetery where the former chief pastor of this city, His Eminence Nikodim, the spiritual father of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, rests in peace.

During my previous visit to St. Petersburg I came to this grave and celebrated the lity for the dead. I feel the inner need to celebrate the lity today too because Metropolitan Nikodim was an outstanding representative not only of the Russian Orthodox Church but the whole Orthodoxy in those hard years we experienced. He dared to be open to the external world. We remember our common work in Constantinople and at various conferences and symposia abroad. And it is not only His Holiness Patriarch Kirill who became his spiritual child. Thanks to him there in the Russian Orthodox Church a whole pleiad of outstanding hierarchs. I believe his soul is now rejoicing at heaven, seeing all his followers.

With a permission of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill I would like to visit also the grave of Fyodor Dostoyevsky and to pray at it for this outstanding representative of the Russian intelligentsia and Russian devotion. In Russia and the Russian Church there were really great personalities, and they produced great defenders of the faith and the country, such as St. Alexander Nevsky. Be proud of what you have, be proud of your faith and your national unique identity!

After the tempest and storm of the 70 year-long godlessness in Russia, her Church and people have begun a new period of history. This period will be ever more glorious because you have such a remarkable Patriarch.

We convey our love and blessing from the Most Holy Church of Constantinople. May the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you as the faith in Him helped you not only to endure the hard times. We thank you for your love and warm welcome”.

His Holiness Bartholomew presented the abbot of the Laura with a pectoral icon and gave the church a silver censer.

Then His Holiness Patriarch Kirill spoke his word:

“Your Holiness, I would like to thank you with all my heart for these warm words you said in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity at St. Alexander Nevsky’s Laura.

It is a special church with a great historical significance. During the 200 years of the so-called Synodal period beginning from Emperor Peter I and till the 1917 Revolution, almost all the hierarchs of the

Russian Orthodox Church received their episcopal consecration in these walls. It was a font which gave birth to several generations of hierarchs in our Church. And I, an unworthy one, was fortunate to receive all the three ordinations as deacon, priest and bishop in this church.

I cordially thank you for the good words about the ever memorable Metropolitan Nikodim, our spiritual father, and about our people who courageously endured the hard years of godlessness. We believe this feat was performed thanks to the fact that the whole Orthodox world prayed for Russia. And today we believe it an important task to promote Orthodox unity and consolidate fraternal love between Orthodox nations. And your visit to Russia will certainly be the most important contribution to this sacred cause. We regret that your historical visit to our country has passed so quickly and we are now approaching its end. But we hope that it is not the last visit. Such exchange of fraternal visits will help strengthen relations between the two Churches, which cherish the common theological, liturgical and spiritual tradition of the great Byzantium.

On behalf of the clergy and laity, I would like to wish you God's help in your primatial ministry. I also wish your honorable retinue, who have come together with you to the Neva banks, good health for many good years.

Many years of life be to His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew and the honorable Eminences, our dear brothers, who have come together with him!"

From the church the two Patriarchs went to Nikolskoye Cemetery, where Patriarch Bartholomew said the lity at the grave of Metropolitan Nikodim. Praying at the memorial service were also bishops of the Orthodox Churches of Constantinople and Russia, numerous clergy, monastics and laity. The two Patriarchs laid baskets of flowers at Metropolitan Nikodim's grave.

In the evening of that day, Patriarchs Bartholomew and Kirill visited the graves of Fyodor Dostoevsky and Petr Tchaikovsky and prayed for the repose of the souls of these great Russians.

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