



Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople visits Department for External Church Relations and gives lecture to students of Sts Cyril and Methodius Post-Graduate School

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His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople visited on 26 May 2010 the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations and met with students of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Post-Graduate and Doctoral School.

The chairman and of Department and rector of the School, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, welcomed His Holiness at the DECR entrance.

In the DECR conference hall, Metropolitan Hilarion greeted His Holiness on behalf of the DECR staff and the School's academic council members and students, saying:

Your Holiness, I am glad to welcome you to the Department for External Church Relations, which you already visited on a previous occasion. I would like to introduce to you the students of the Russian Orthodox Church's Sts Cyril and Methodius Post-Graduate and Doctoral School. This theological school was founded on the initiative of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and by the Holy Synod decision of March 31, 2009.

Before you are students of the first enrolment. Among them is a bishop, several archimandrites and hegumens, monastics and lay people. It is a theological school of the new century. We offer our student a type of education which they could not receive either in Seminary or Theological Academy.

We would like to give our students an opportunity to hear lectures of outstanding people and prominent scholars so that they may enrich their experience and broaden their knowledge in theology, church administration and church external relations.

On behalf of all the professors and students of the School, I would like once again to cordially greet Your Holiness.

Then Patriarch Bartholomew read a lecture on World as Sacrament. The Theological and Spiritual Vision of the World.

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After the lecture the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople addressed the gathering again. He said:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am happy that this day has begun with a meeting with you, and I greet you from the bottom of my heart in the name of our Lord. I am very glad that His Eminence Hilarion has included a visit to the Department for Church External Relations in the program of our visit to Russia. Really, seventeen years ago I already happened to be here. We highly appreciate the work of the DECR because, on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the Department is engaged in what helps to develop fraternal relations not only between Local Orthodox Churches but also with non-Orthodox Christian churches and denominations.

I highly appreciate the fact that you have dedicated yourselves to the service of the Church, that you have put yourselves at the disposal of the Church and have prepared yourselves for the Church's blessing upon your further service to her. We, older people, need you, the new generation of young people well trained and educated for making fruitful the future ministry of the Church.

I will say a few words concerning the problems of the environment. As you know, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople have been engaged for some years in this problem in the light of the teaching on God the Creator in order to draw the attention of as many people as possible to this problem. His Eminence Hilarion said he invited outstanding people and prominent scholars to speak to the Post-Graduate School. Unfortunately, I am not an outstanding person, nor a prominent scholar, but I am happy to spend this morning with you and to leave to you some considerations concerning the problem of the environment.

In our days here in Russia, I am very glad to see that the Church maintains cooperation with people of science, with society, with politicians. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill met with many representatives of Russian society just yesterday. We highly appreciate this openness of Patriarch Kirill.

It is inadmissible for the Church in the 21st century to isolate herself within church walls. We need to be open to society. I am very happy to see young people, like you are, because you prepare yourselves for the service of the Church, for this great mission. I congratulate my fellow-Patriarch Kirill, His Eminence Hilarion and his staff on the launching of this new project – the Church Post-Graduate School, which was initiated last year. Thank you all for your attention.

Metropolitan Hilarion thanked His Holiness the Patriarch of Constantinople for his visit and talk to the

students. He said:

Your Holiness, allow me, on behalf of the professors and students of the Church Post-Graduate and Doctoral School, to thank you for having found time and opportunity to visit the DECR and speak to the students. You are known throughout the world not only as the first among the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches but also as a man who by his status is the coordinator of inter-Orthodox efforts in various fields, but also as a man who has given special attention to the environment. And in your lecture today you have clearly shown why an Orthodox Christian and an Orthodox church leader should be concerned for the environmental problems.

I would like to note that some thirty years ago the late Patriarch Alexy II, then Metropolitan of Leningrad and Tallinn, made a major statement on the environment. This statement came out later in 'Church and Times' magazine published by the DECR. Remarkably, many things you have stated today have much in common with what the late Patriarch stated. The conservation of the environment is our common task. It is our sacred duty as religious people, as Christians. In citing the words of Isaac of Nineveh, you have reminded us that love for the environment is also a patristic advice, and in citing the words of *starets* Zosima from *The Karamazov Brothers* by Dostoyevsky, you have reminded us that this patristic enjoinder also runs all through the Russian literature and culture.

Yesterday when you visited the country working residence of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, you had a happy opportunity to talk not only with members of the Russian Orthodox delegation but also those of our lesser friends who inhabit this residence – swans and ducks, peacocks and pheasants, little dogs and cats. And I am glad that these brief moments of rest after a strained working day reminded us that those who love all the God-created world should love all the creation, as St. Isaac of Nineveh enjoined – should love human beings and animals and birds and creeping beings and every creature.

We thank you, Your Holiness, for your kind and wise words addressed to our post-graduates. We wish you God's help in your lofty and important ministry. Allow me, on behalf of our students, to present you with this icon of the Most Holy Mother of God painted by contemporary Russian artist Protodeacon Alexis Trunin, and to wish you that the Most Holy Other of God may preserve you for many good years.

Then the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople and his delegation proceeded to the office of the DECR chairman for a fraternal talk.

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