



## **Primates of Orthodox Churches of Constantinople and Russia meet with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev**

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His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with President Dmitry Medvedev of the Russian Federation on 25 May 2010.

Welcoming the head of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, the leader of the Russian State said:

Your Holiness, I am very glad to welcome you to the Kremlin. The visit of Your Holiness to our country is a significant event, and it will certainly help to strengthen the dialogue which has always bound the two sister Churches. For Russia, it is especially important considering that Russia to a considerable extent is a country in which most of the population are Orthodox by confession. Therefore, we are closely following your visit and what is happening now.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill visited the Patriarchate of Constantinople last year and was your guest; this year you are our guest, and certainly it is of great importance for the whole Orthodox world.

There have been many changes in recent times in Russia and we all are witnesses to them, and I am very glad, Your Holiness, that you have an opportunity to see what are in my view favourable changes taking place both in the life of our country and in the life of Russian society and in the dialogue held within our country between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state.

It is only as a result of this dialogue that it is possible to fulfill very complicated tasks facing our state today as well as the tasks which stem from the very complicated economic situation developed in the world as a result of the financial crisis. This is why we so much appreciate the constructive and valid dialogue which has been established in recent times with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Allow me, Your Holiness, to express hope that in the course of your visit you will be able to get a better knowledge of the life of our country and today's life of the Russian Orthodox Church.

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople spoke in response, saying:

Your Excellency, I would like to express warm gratitude to you personally for the invitation, for your meeting with me and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. I and my fellow-travelers are very glad that we are in Russia in these days as guests of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. We are very glad that our visit has coincided with the celebrations to mark the Days of Slavonic Literature in Culture and the Name-Day of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, whom we received with great love and respect in our Patriarchate. We thank you for the fact that the feast of the Slavonic literature is an official one in Russia. We rejoice in the good relations and cooperation existing between the state and the Russian Church. The Russian leadership and the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church are writing new pages in history. Russian

society asserts itself on its traditional moral values, on Christian ideals; it is the best guarantee of the people's future. Thank you, Mr. President.

Addressing President Medvedev, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said:

Highly Esteemed Dmitry Anatolievich, I join His Holiness in thanking you for the opportunity to meet with you here, in the Kremlin, together with Patriarch Bartholomew who is making an official visit to Russia, which is of great importance for our bilateral relations.

All the Local Orthodox Churches are parts of one Church; we all belong to this one Church. Such is the Orthodox ecclesiology: there is only one Orthodox Church. But in every country Orthodox people experience their own problems and encounter challenges typical for their own situation. Therefore it is so important that Primates of Local Orthodox Churches should keep in contact for exchange of thoughts and pastoral experiences.

In addition, there are also common Orthodox problems which have been difficult even to begin considering and settling for long decades. And the bilateral relations between our two Churches, especially the exchange of these fraternal visits and the good personal relations which have been established between us, help to resolve these common Orthodox problems. Apart from official speeches which we exchange and which are called to present our position to the whole world, we keep continued fraternal dialogue every day, which is a no less important way than an exchange of official speeches to communicate meanings, knowledge, feelings and all that is necessary to be exchanged for the common good. But the most important thing is that we pray together. We celebrate the Divine Liturgy together. And in these efforts God is with us, and we believe that He leads our Churches and the whole Orthodoxy along the way which is in His hands.

The primates and the president continued their talk during dinner the Head of the Russian State gave in honour of the visit of His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to Moscow.

*DECR Communication Service*

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