



## **His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople arrived on a visit to the Russian Orthodox Church**

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On 22 May 2010, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople began his visit to the Russian Orthodox Church. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met the Primate of the Church of Constantinople at "Vnukovo" airport in Moscow.

Taking part in the ceremony were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Arseny of Istra; Archbishop Mark of Yegorievsk, secretary of the Moscow Patriarchate for Institutions Abroad; Bishop Merkury of Zarskoye, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechization; Bishop Irinarkh of Krasnogorsk, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Ministry in Prisons; Bishop Ignaty of Bronnitsy; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Bishop Ieronim (Chernyshov); Bishop Kirill of Sergiev Posad, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Relations with the Cossacks;; Chairman of the Synodal Information Department V. Legoida; DECR deputy chairman archpriest Nikolai Balashov; DECR secretary for Inter-Orthodox Relations Revd. Igor Yakimchuk; deans and clerics of Moscow, monks, representatives of the Orthodox youth, and pupils of Sunday schools.

Also taking part in the meeting were representatives of state authorities: Minister A. Avdeyev of Culture and Mass Communications; Presidential Envoy in the Central Federal District G. Poltavchenko; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Greece to Russia M. Spineless, and first secretary of the Turkish Embassy in Moscow Ahmet Akinci.

The delegation of the Church of Constantinople consists of Metropolitans Michael of Austria, Irinaios of Myriophyton and Peristasis, Emmanuel of France, general secretary of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople archimandrite Elphidophoros, Archdeacon Maximos, and Archimandrite Bessarion.

His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew was presented at the aircraft ladder with bread and salt in accordance with a Russian custom, and with flowers.

The Primate of the two Churches answered questions of the journalists. As to the purpose of his visit, His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople said:

"First of all I would like to thank the Almighty God Who blessed and vouchsafed me to come to Moscow. After thanking God, I thank His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the invitation that gives us an opportunity to pay another visit to the Holy Russian Church and to give His Holiness Patriarch Kirill his due for his visit to Constantinople. However, it is not the only purpose of my visit to Moscow and Russia. We have arrived as pilgrims from the land that has brought to life many martyrs and confessors of the Orthodox faith in the distant and recent past. We bring blessings of the Holy Church of Constantinople to the Russian Church – our sister and daughter. We are proud of her and celebrate in her honour as we see her success. We hope that our visit to Moscow would serve to the strengthening of our fraternal relations for the good of Orthodoxy and to the glory of God. Christ is in the midst of us!"

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia answered a question about the dynamics of relations between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow, saying:

"I highly appreciate the recent development of relations between the two Churches. They include not only exchange of fraternal visits, though they are important. They include concrete agreements conducive to a more active cooperation among all Orthodox Churches, including the resolution of problems on the agenda of inter-Orthodox relations. I express my profound joy with the visit of my beloved brother His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to Moscow. We are united by our Patriarchal ministry and many years of good relations. I am happy to see him in Moscow on his official visit and hope that it will become another important page in the book of the glorious history of our relations. I say on behalf of our entire nation: Welcome, Your Holiness!"

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