



## **Church representatives take part in the events dedicated to the Katyn tragedy**

On 7 April 2010, state events commemorating the memory of the Russian and Polish citizens who were shot during the years of Stalin's repressions, took place in the territory of the Katyn memorial. The events timed to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the shooting of Polish officers in the woods near the village of Katyn, Smolensk region, were lead by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and the Polish Prime Minister Donald Franciszek Tusk. With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazma and by hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh), the deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for external church relations.

The Polish side was represented at the ceremony by His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland, the Primate of the Polish Orthodox Church, archpriest Georgy Doroszkewicz, head of the Metropolitan's office; Bishop Tadeusz Pikus, president of the Council for Ecumenism of the Polish Episcopal Conference, and the Revd. Jarosław Mroczynski, deputy general secretary of the Polish Episcopal Conference; and other representatives of the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities of Poland who have arrived with Prime Minister Tusk as members of the delegation.

Bishop Feofilakt of Smolensk and Vyazma conveyed greeting from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on whose initiative the Church of the Resurrection is being constructed, and thanked the Russian Prime Minister for his personal support in the building of the memorial church. Bishop Feofilakt noted the great contribution of the "Rosneft" Company president S. Bogdanchikov into the implementation of the project. Having expressed his hope for the completion of the construction in the nearest future, he said: "We are confident that the building of this church will be a solid foundation of friendship among many nations, the martyrs of which are rested here. This place is a sacred place for us. It is like a good field where the seeds are being sown from which the great memory is growing along with the hope for peaceful life and good brotherly relations to be granted by the merciful God to our land, our people, and pour states through confession of the martyrs."

Prime Minister Putin spoke after the office of the laying of the foundation and underscored that this place was a place of tragedy, but with the building of the church it will be a sacred place. "It will be a place where people will come to lay flowers, to pray, to remember their near and dear and the victims of repressions, and to do anything possible for the tragedy never to be repeated in our history. It is a symbolic act that we begin to build the church on Easter days of the year in which the Orthodox and the Catholics celebrate Easter on the same day. With the blessing of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All

Russia, Orthodox icons will be brought here, which are venerated by the Orthodox and the Catholics, especially in Poland. This will be another symbol uniting our nations." In conclusion of his speech, the Russian Prime Minister congratulated all those gathered with the Bright Resurrection of Christ.

Bishop Feofilakt presented Vladimir Putin and Donald Tusk with the Smolensk "Hodegetria" Icons of the Mother of God to commemorate the laying of the church foundation. The Russian Prime Minister presented an icon of the Resurrection of Christ to the church in Katyn.

Later, representatives of the Polish religious communities visited the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God in Smolensk.

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