



On Annunciation Day Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visits Donskoy Monastery

On the Day of the Annunciation, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visited the Donskoy Monastery where he said a thanksgiving at the relics of St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, on the occasion of the 85th anniversary of his demise. Present at the thanksgiving were guests from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland including Archbishop Yukka Paarma of Turku and Finland, director for international relations Risto Cantell, the archbishop's secretary Rev. Heikki Jaaskelainen and the Rev. Timo Roskvist, as well as Lithuanian Ambassador to Russia Antanas Vinkus and the chairman of the Conference of Catholic Bishops in Lithuania, Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevicius of Kaunas.

During the lunch after the prayer service, Patriarch Kirill welcomed Archbishop Paarma who had led the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland for twelve years. In June 2010 he will retire. His Holiness said that through the efforts of the archbishop, relations between the two Churches were especially friendly and cordial. Archbishop Yukka Paarma led the Finish delegation during theological talks with the Russian Orthodox Church on three occasions and the results of these dialogues were especially successful.

The next meeting of Russian Orthodox and Finish Lutheran theologians will take place in 2011. It will be devoted to the theme 'The Church as a Community: Christian Identity and Membership in the Church'.

Patriarch Kirill expressed concern over the recent statements of Archbishop Paarma's successor Kari Maakinen, the new archbishop of Turku and Finland, who spoke in favour of the church blessing upon same-sex unions. The patriarch expressed hope that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland would continue sharing the Russian Orthodox Church's negative attitude to this practice exercised in a number of Protestant communities in Western Europe.