



Decisions of the Bishops' Conference on 2 February 2010

The Bishops' Conference, at its meeting in Moscow during the celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, thanks His Holiness for many efforts and good initiatives undertaken during his first year, including the initiative to hold this meeting.

After a discussion on the report of His Holiness the Patriarch, the Bishops' Conference made the following decisions concerning various aspects of church life.

I. Church governance

I. 1. With gratitude to the Lord, to note the progress made in continuing to order the life of the Russian Orthodox Church.

I. 2. To express support for the decisions of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod, which have led to essential changes in the pastoral, administrative and judicial work of the Russian Orthodox Church and to note that these changes help to strengthen the conciliar principle in church life.

I. 3. To point to the especial importance of the Patriarchal visits to Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan as a vivid confirmation of the people of God's will to preserve and consolidate church unity.

I. 4. To recognize as necessary an intensification of consistent efforts of the episcopate, clergy and laity to strengthen fellowship among various parts of the Russian Orthodox Church and implementation of all the measures envisioned by the 2008 Bishops' Council Decision on the Unity of the Church.

I. 5. To consider it necessary to ensure a further cohesion of the common civilizational space of the historical Rus' and cooperation with state structures and public organizations in this area among all countries comprising the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church as well as a further consolidation of spiritual, cultural and social ties with compatriots living in 'far-abroad' countries.

I. 6. To approve His Holiness the Patriarch's proposal for disseminating liturgical and catechetical texts,

Patriarchal messages and other major documents of the Russian Orthodox Church in the vernacular of the peoples under its pastoral care.

I. 7. To stress the importance of re-thinking the forms and methods of pastoral, missionary, youth, educational and charitable work carried out in dioceses and parishes. Expressing gratitude to the Synodal institutions and their leaders for the work carried out so far in this area, to consider it necessary to increase coordination and methodological support they should give to respective diocesan departments and officials.

I. 8. For Russian Orthodox dioceses and parishes to take into account and be guided by the decisions made as proposed by His Holiness the Patriarch in the resolution of the Moscow Diocesan Assembly (23 December 2009) on the State and Development of Church Life in the Capital City.

I. 9. To point to the need to improve the administrative, judicial and financial work of the dioceses along the lines of changes made on the church-wide level, and to give special attention to the need for dioceses to give adequate financing to the central church institutions and to support the Russian Orthodox Church's Sofrino factory by purchasing its products. In doing so, the dioceses should maintain dialogue with the factory concerning the quality and prices of their production.

I. 10. To continue updating the theological education reform; to point to the importance of assigning theological graduates to duties where they can fully realize the knowledge and skills Holy Church has instilled in them during their training.

II. Church-state-society cooperation

II. 1. To express satisfaction at the work of the newly-established Synodal Department for Church-Society Cooperation.

II. 2. To increase the Russian Orthodox Church's cooperation with governmental bodies in the countries of its canonical space and diaspora, especially with the aim to adopt as soon as possible the legal acts and by-laws regulating the transfer to the Church the property of which it has been unjustly deprived.

II. 3. To consider it advisable for the implementation of the above initiative to set up everywhere diocesan departments for church-society cooperation or to assign diocesan officials responsible for these relations. These departments and officials should coordinate their work with the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations.

II. 4. To recognize it as necessary to conduct in every diocese a Day of Slavonic Literature and Culture on the Commemoration Day of Sts Cyril and Methodius Equal-to-the-Apostles. On this day as well as previous and subsequent ones, church-public events should be held with the participation of public at large.

II. 5. To consider it important to hold meaningful celebrations on the Day of People's Unity in Moscow and to consider it useful for dioceses to take an active part in the church-public forum-exhibition on Orthodox Rus' – Towards the Day of the People's Unity and to hold in regions marches and other festive activities devoted to the unity of peoples beyond national, social, political and other differences.

II. 6. To point to the importance of coordinating the work of Orthodox public organizations while maintaining continuous contacts with hierarchs and the clergy.

III. Publishing work

III. 1. To note the need for the Russian Orthodox Church's Publishing Board to review and classify all the publications intended for dissemination through the church system and for diocesan, monastery and parish publishing houses to submit their products to the Publishing Board after an appropriate permission is obtained from the ruling bishop.

III. 2. To recognize that it is possible for a ruling bishop to authorize publications and audio- and video-products for dissemination in his diocese only subject to a positive review received from the Publishing Board. Any publication authorized by an auxiliary or retired bishop or a cleric or mother superior is inadmissible.

III. 3. Considering the specificity of publishing process, to define the year 2010 as a transition period in which publishing houses should come in contact with the Publishing Board concerning the review of publications and the Publishing Board should establish the review procedure.

III. 4. To point to the importance of observing each March 1/14 as the Day of Orthodox Book in every diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church.

III. 5. To consider it advisable to open and activate libraries at diocesan administrations, major city churches and monasteries as religious education centers with groups of Christian enlightenment seekers organized at them.

IV. Information work

IV. 1. Welcoming the establishment of a Synodal Information Department, to give special attention to the Church's presence in informational space and to pursue a common and coordinated information policy on all the levels beginning from the church-wide to parish one. In doing so, it is necessary to increase cooperation between diocesan information workers and the Synodal Information Department.

IV. 2. To point to the need to develop church mass media and means to control the quality of their materials. Instrumental in this respect is the Holy Synod Decision of 25 December 2009 to introduce the compulsory expertise of the periodicals going through the system of church book distribution to be made by the Synodal Information Department.

IV. 3. To support the periodical distribution measures proposed by His Holiness and the Holy Synod; to promote the distribution of publications included in the lists recommended by the Synodal Information Department; to give additional attention to the distribution of official publications of the Russian Orthodox Church – *Zhurnal of Moskovskoy Patriarii* and *Tserkovny vestnik*.

V. Cooperation with the Armed Forces and law enforcement

V. 1. To see to it that personnel to be assigned as staff chaplains to military units and formations in the canonical territory of dioceses be carefully chosen. In doing so, a ruling bishop should coordinate his work with the Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement.

V. 2. To recommend to the Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement to draft together with the Department for Church-Society Relations proposals for making amendments to the Russian Federation Law on Alternative Service so that the clergy who did not do conscription could be given an opportunity to join the alternative service as staff chaplains; to study similar proposals for improving the legislation in other states comprising the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate, as deemed advisable.

V. 3. In order to bring the life and work of the Cossacks in line with their time-honoured Orthodox

traditions, to consider it necessary to streamline the pastoral care of the Cossacks in all the countries of our Church's canonical space and to assign in dioceses with a presence of the Cossacks officials responsible for work with them.

VI. Religious education and catechisation

VI. 1. To express satisfaction at the revival of Orthodox education in the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate; to consider it important to establish a system of continued Orthodox education and moral formation of children and youth.

VI. 2. To established systemic and continued cooperation between diocesan religious education and catechisation departments with the respective Synodal Department; to recognize it as useful to hold regular conferences of diocesan department heads with representatives of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechism.

VI. 3. To consider it advisable to establish teaching technique offices at diocesan religious education departments with the aim to improve the teaching of Orthodox culture in general education schools and the work of Orthodox educational institutions and to prepare registers of Orthodox Culture teachers in dioceses who have the necessary qualifications and a recommendation from the diocese.

VI. 4. To consider it important to develop cooperation between the clergy and Orthodox educators with the aim to systematise the advanced pedagogical experience in the Russian Orthodox Church.

VI. 5. To give positive assessment to the work carried out by the Department for Religious Education and Catechism to maintain cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science in implementing the experimental project for teaching Basic Orthodox Culture. In order to make this experiment a success, it is necessary to improve cooperation between diocesan religious education and catechism departments with regional educational structures in preserving and developing the positive experience of teaching Orthodox Culture. It is necessary to seek to extend this experience to other states in the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate.

VI. 6. To consider it desirable to have the state support for Orthodox educational institutions and to develop and adopt state-church programs for Orthodox education so that citizens' demand that their children should be taught Orthodox culture in the federal and municipal general education system may be met.

VII. External church work

VII. 1. To thank His Holiness the Patriarch and the Holy Synod for efforts to consolidate Orthodox unity; to approve the work carried out in this area by the Department for External Church Relations.

VII. 2. To note with satisfaction the position taken by our Church in the preparations for a Pan-Orthodox Council and the results of the Patriarchal visit to the Church of Constantinople as well as the successful development of relations between the Moscow Patriarchate and Local Orthodox Church.

VII. 3. To deem useful the work carried out by the Department for External Church Relations in the sphere of inter-Christian relations, called to continue bearing witness to the undistorted apostolic faith and defending traditional Christian values in the life of modern society.

VII. 4. To note the importance of mutually respectful dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the authorities and public in other countries.

VII. 5. To give positive assessment to the Church's experience of cooperation with international organizations in discussing topical problems of today and to support the initiative for establishing a consultative group of high-ranking religious leaders under UNESCO Director General as an effective mechanism of making the voice of the people of faith heard by the world community.

VII. 6. To deem it useful to develop interreligious dialogue both inside and outside the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church with the aim to support public stability, to prevent conflicts on religious grounds, to oppose together the challenges of aggressive secularism and to achieve good-neighbourly and peaceful coexistence between peoples of various religious traditions and cultures.