



## **Primate of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia lectures to the postgraduate students**

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On 28 January 2010, at the Moscow Patriarchate Department for external church relations, His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia read a lecture to the students of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate and Doctoral Programme of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, rector and DECR chairman, said before the lecture: "His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher is not only the Primate of an Orthodox Church, but also an internationally acclaimed scholar, who speaks several languages and is a great friend of old of the Russian Orthodox Church." He also remarked that the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia played an important part in the inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian dialogue.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher told the students about the order and inner structure of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, its history and its life at the present time.

He said that Orthodox theology was taught in Czechia and Slovakia within the state system of education. For instance, the Orthodox Theological Faculty is a part of the State Prešov University. 'The peoples of Czechia and Slovakia are aware of an important part played by the Church in their life.'

The Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia reminded the students: "the Holy Russia comprises not only Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova, but also a part of Slovakia called the Prešov Rus, where many Orthodox Christians have lived for a long time."

According to His Beatitude Christopher, 99% of the population of Slovakia consider themselves believers, including 95% Catholics and 53,000 Orthodox. There are 25,000 Orthodox in Czechia, while 70% of the population consider themselves non-believers. This requires a particular approach on the part of the pastors.

Attending the lecture were archpriest Nikolai Balashov, the DECR deputy chairman; archpriest Alexy Yuschenko, representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia at the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; and DECR staff members.

In conclusion of the meeting, His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher answered questions.

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