



Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addresses faculty and students of the Russian Academy of State Service under the President of the Russian Federation

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On 29 December 2009, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the leadership, faculty, and students of the Russian Academy of State Service under the President of the Russian Federation.

Present at the meeting were Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations; archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-State Relations; V. Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Department for Information; archpriest Andrei Milkin, acting chief of the Patriarch's protocol service; hieromonk Philipp (Ryabykh), deputy chairman of the DECR; Rev. Sergy Zvonarev, acting DECR secretary for far abroad countries; hierodeacon Antony (Sevryuk), chief of the Patriarch's personal secretariat; archpriest Georgy Studenov, rector of the Church of St. Michael in Troparevo; and DECR staff members K. Peregudin, M. Palasio, and V. Yefanova.

His Holiness visited the RASS information and situational centre and took part in the TV link-up with other Russian cities. The Patriarch's visit was broadcast in the Internet.

The rector of the Academy V. Yegorov greeted His Holiness on behalf of the faculty and students.

In address His Holiness spoke about the present state and prospects of relations between the Church and the state in Russia.

He told the audience about the shaping of a new system of these relations in Russia after *perestroika*. His Holiness noted that the old model "could not be transferred to the new Russia."

Speaking about the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church to political issues, His Holiness underscored that "God judges man not by his political views, but by other criteria," and the Church, therefore, does not interfere into political struggle or support any political party, but considers it necessary to appeal to the people "with clear and spiritual comments on all events in the country."

His Holiness also said that success of social development depends on the correct cooperation between

religious organizations and the state, and the Church offers the state to cooperate on the basis of the symphony of secular and religious authorities, as the idea of cooperation in the fields of common interest can be found in the very principle of symphony.

His Holiness underscored that the Church strived for systematic relations with the state and society on the basis of an important document, "The Fundamentals of the social concept of the Russian Orthodox Church" adopted by the Jubilee Bishops' Council in 2000. The Patriarch noted many Church-State agreements signed for the recent fifteen years and emphasized that the success of such practice shows that society demands cooperation between the Church and the state.

There are critics accusing the Church in interfering into political process, but their accusations are groundless, as the Russian law says nothing about a ban on Church-State relations, and nothing prevents cooperation between the Church and the state, His Holiness continued.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church emphasized that these relations were based on mutual respect and trust and mentioned some main fields of cooperation, such as "care for moral education of the youth, support of the institute of family, struggle against drug addiction, alcoholism and other socially dangerous vices, prevention of crime, care for the prisoners, preservation of cultural heritage, overcoming of ethnic and religious intolerance, keeping of social order, standing in the way of pseudo-religious movements, resolution of international conflicts, promotion of dialogue among religions and cultures both on the state and world levels, including dialogue in international institutions."

In conclusion His Holiness greeted the audience with the coming New Year and the Nativity of Christ.

V. Yegorov announced that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia was awarded the title of doctor *honoris causa* of the Russian Academy of State Service. After delivering the regalia, the Agreement was signed.

His Holiness presented the Academy with twenty-two volumes of "The Orthodox Encyclopedia."