



## Archbishop Hilarion meets with Orthodox clergy in Asian-Pacific region

Archbishop Hilarion, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, during his pastoral visit to Thailand, met on Dec. 18 with the Russian Orthodox clergy who serve in the Asian-Pacific region.

Participating in the meeting, which took place at St. Nicholas's Church in Bangkok, were clergy in charge of the Moscow Patriarchate parishes in China, Thailand, Mongolia, Indonesia, Singapore and other countries of the region.

Addressing the clergy, Archbishop Hilarion thanked them for their hard work for the good of the Church of Christ, saying, 'Your service is of special significance to our Church. It is a truly missionary and ascetic service carried out in difficult conditions, not only climatic but also psychological and spiritual. You live under conditions almost as close as those in which the apostles lived and served. This places a special responsibility on you but at the same time requires special inner strength. Not every priest is capable of enduring the conditions in which you have to live and work'.

A priest who fulfills his service far from his homeland, he said, is called to a special spiritual vigilance and gravity and should always work to improve himself. 'Your service must not and cannot depend on your inner or spiritual state. Whenever you are to serve according to your church's schedule, you must come and serve whether you wish it or not, whether you are in low or high spirits. You must have a special inner pivot which will help you to bear the great cross of pastoral ministry. You should always be on the alert, ready to come to the aid of those who need help'.