



3d World Congress of Compatriots section meeting on 'The role of the ROC and other traditional confessions in consolidation of united space of the Russian World'

The 3d World Congress of Compatriots section meeting on 'The role of the ROC and other traditional confessions in consolidation of united space of the Russian World' on Dec. 2 at the Danilovskaya Hotel discussed the experience of work with compatriots on diocesan and parochial levels, prospects of this work in the far- and near-abroad countries and challenges faced in this area.

Opening the meeting its co-moderator, DECR vice-chairman Rev. Philip Riabykh pointed out that both Patriarch Kirill and President Medvedev in their programmatic speeches at the Congress opening underlined the importance of joint work of church and state in supporting our compatriots abroad and building one system of everyday joint local efforts, because 'it is the Moscow Patriarchate parishes abroad that have become the centers where our compatriots can feel as nowhere else their ties with the Motherland', he said.

Addressing officials of the Russian Foreign Office present at the section meeting, Bishop Alexander of Baku and the Transcaspian Region stressed how important it was that Russian diplomats should maintain cooperation with Russian church structures abroad and that Russian Ambassador come to Moscow Patriarchate parishes for Christmas and Easter celebrations.

Rev. Arseny Sokolov, rector of the Russian Orthodox Parish of All Saints in Lisbon noted that a today's parish abroad cannot remain only a place for divine services but should participate more actively in the life of the faithful.

It was repeatedly stated that it was an Orthodox parish in the far- and near-abroad countries that could become a uniting center, if it did not limit itself to the liturgical function.

Archpriest Mikhail Dudko spoke about peculiarities of pastoral work in the Surozh diocese. He underlined that the Russian Orthodox Church was not simply an ethnic Church but a Church of mission, which adds to her tasks abroad. He also noted celebration of particular events or dates in parishes could become an excellent opportunity for establishing cooperation and contacts at the highest level and urged to support the project for exchanging shrines between various Russian Orthodox parishes both inside and outside Russia.

The theme of social changes taking place in the membership of parishes abroad and important of cooperation with secular organizations was raised by Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany (Russian Church Abroad). He stated that emigrants throughout Europe were not as interested as those before them in the preservation of Russian culture. If until 1990s the Church assembled most of the people of the first and second emigration wave, now the situation changed. Yet there are cases where people come to think about a return to their historical roots, being abroad. Orthodox parishes therefore are capable also now to make a serious contribution to the preservation and development of Russian self-awareness abroad.

The section adopted recommendations to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, proposing, among other things, to build a systemic cooperation between the DECR, the Ministry, the Federal Agency for Compatriots, the Russian Orthodox dioceses and parishes abroad and compatriots' associations and international institutions and organizations in protecting the rights of compatriots to their religious, linguistic and cultural identity and to create a united information space of the Russian World.

DECR Communications Service

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