



Patriarch Kiril made Doctor of Theology by the Byelorussian State University Institute of Theology

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, during his patriarchal visit to Belarus, visited on 26 September 2009 the Byelorussian State University's Sts Cyril and Methodius Institute of Theology.

The faculty and students came out to welcome the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and to take him to their assembly hall. Patriarch Kirill was welcomed there by Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus, in his capacity of the rector of the institute. The pro-rector for studies, Mr. G. Petrovsky, spoke about the work of the institute.

The Institute of Theology was founded as a legally independent structural unit of Byelorussian State University in November 2004 with the support of the Byelorussian president. It trains theologians-researchers of religions, teachers of ethics and aesthetics and culturologists for work in governmental bodies, the education system, research institutes and the mass media. The MA-course students major in Religious Studies, Philosophic Anthropology and Philosophy of Culture.

The teaching process is based on the national standard in Theology developed by the institute faculty led by its rector Metropolitan Filaret.

The research carried out by the institute staff is focused on the history and the present state of the Orthodox Church and its role in shaping the statehood and spiritual culture of the Byelorussian people. The staff publishes over 50 monographs, reference books and articles annually. Mr. Petrovsky presented to Patriarch Kirill the latest publications including a reference book on Basic Systematic Religious Research and the Bible as a Monument of Culture, recommended for colleges and vocational schools.

Another area of the institute's work is holding international scholarly conferences of professors and researchers and students' forums. Thus in 2009 there were the 15th International Sts Cyril and Methodius Readings on the theme 'The spiritual foundations of socio-economic sustainability'. It is planned to conduct in September 2010 in Minsk the 5th International Symposium of

Eastern European researchers of the New Testament on the theme 'the Gospel's images of the Lord Jesus Christ in the church tradition and biblical

The institute's first pro-rector, Bishop Seraphim of Bobruisk and Bakhov, read out a resolution of the institute's council that 'His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia be awarded the degree of Doctor of Theology *honoris causa* in acknowledgment of his outstanding contribution to the development of theological education and scholarship and active educational and publicistic work'.

Speaking in response, His Holiness shared with the audience his reflections on the significance of theological scholarship. 'It is my profound conviction that the place of theological education will grow in significance for the life of our Church. While some time ago the religiosity of our people was associated with church attendance, participation in worship and in ritual side of church life, today our intellectuals' and scientific community's turning to faith, to Orthodoxy, assigns a very significant place to the intellectual component of church life, which is theology', he said.

He also expressed a high appreciation of the model of cooperation between theology and secular scholarship realized in particular in the Sts Cyril and Methodius Institute of Theology.

'Theology is of a high academic significance. It is also beneficial for secular scholarship to come in touch with theology within universities. It was in theological disputes that the methodology of intellectual discussion was forged, and the European philosophical discourse was formed in close relations with theology', His Holiness reminded the audience.

The work of a theologian, a priest and a church social worker is of tremendous importance today, His Holiness noted.

He wished success to the Byelorussian institute and presented its faculty and students with an Icon of St. Nicholas the Wonder-worker.