



The church of the Life-Giving Trinity consecrated in Pyongyang. The Russian Orthodox Church delegation on a visit to the KPDR

On 11 August 2006, the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations (DECR) Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad left Moscow for Pyongyang to consecrate the church of the Life-Giving Trinity in that city. Metropolitan Kirill was accompanied by the DECR deputy chairman Bishop Mark of Yegorievsk and the DECR secretary for interorthodox relations Rev. Nikolai Balashov.

On August 12, during a short stop at the Beijing airport, Metropolitan Kirill met with the representatives of the State Administration for Religious Affairs of the People's Republic of China State Council Jun Xiang and Wang Yanming. They discussed the results of the World Summit of Religious Leaders held recently in Moscow with participation of the Chinese delegation and exchanged opinions on the prospects of cooperation between the State Administration for Religious Affairs of China and the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations as well as the upcoming consecration of a church in the North Korean capital. Taking part in the talk also were ambassador at large of the Russian Foreign Ministry M. Mayorov, minister-counsellor of the Russian Embassy to China I. Morgulov and other Russian officials.

Among those meeting Metropolitan Kirill at the Pyongyang airport were the Russian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the KPDR A. Karlov, North Korean officials, Archbishop Veniamin of Vladivostok and Primorski Krai, Bishop Ionafan of Abakan and Kyzyl.

Archbishop Veniamin officiated at the All-Night Vigil in concelebration with Bishop Ionafan, Russian and Korean clergymen.

On Sunday, August 13, a ceremony dedicated to the completion of construction of the church took place at the western entrance to the church of the Life-Giving Trinity located in the southern part of Pyongyang.

Metropolitan Kirill addressed those attending the ceremony, saying 'We are taking part in an historical

event. Russian Orthodox people arrived in Korea over one hundred years ago. The life of the Orthodox Church has begun, and the two nations began to understand each other better. However, after World War II the Russian Orthodox Church had to leave the south of Korea due to political reasons. Today we shall consecrate a church of the Life-Giving Trinity in Pyongyang. This is the Korean Orthodox church built on the initiative of the North Korean leader Kim Jong Il with active participation of the KPDR Orthodox Committee by 'the renowned Korean masters.' The Russian Orthodox Church has 'assisted the construction with love and joy.' The fact that the Korean priests will celebrate in this church gives us a particular joy. The church will be opened for the Korean believers as well as for all Orthodox Christians residing in the city. Cooperation between our countries is extending, and many Russian people come here. We are convinced that the Trinity church will become a remarkable symbol of the Russian-Korean friendship and help many people find the beauty of Orthodoxy.'

Metropolitan Kirill, Archbishop Veniamin, Bishop Ionafan and Bishop Mark and Russian and Korean clergymen conducted the office of the great blessing of the church. After the procession with the cross, a shrine with the relics of the holy new martyr Sergius of Rakvere was put at the basis of the sanctuary. Then the Divine Liturgy was celebrated during which Metropolitan Kirill ordained a graduate of the Moscow Theological seminary deacon Feodor Kim to serve as a priest in the new church. Praying at the Liturgy were Orthodox Christians residing in Pyongyang and the guests of the North Korean capital.

After the Liturgy Metropolitan Kirill addressed the worshippers and greeted them on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia. Metropolitan Kirill noted that the architecture and the interior of the church are worthy of praise. He added that the church was designed as a symbol of the Russian-Korean friendship and said that the church was not a dead, but a living monument, and people coming here would be its main treasure. They will include the Koreans, the Russians and representatives of other Orthodox countries residing in Pyongyang. The churches are built for people to pray in them. Pyongyang was ruined during the war, and the new church is a visible contribution into the decoration of the capital city. We wish the Korean people peace, prosperity, and peaceful reunification, while always being independent and free. We shall pray for this church to stand till the ends of the times as we did during its consecration.'

Metropolitan Kirill presented an icon of the Holy Trinity to the church. Patriarchal awards were conferred on many Korean and Russian officials.

The evening divine service with the office of the Adoration of the Precious Cross was led by Bishop Mark of Yegorievsk.

On August 14, Metropolitan Kirill officiated at the Divine Liturgy in the Trinity church. A graduate of the Moscow Theological seminary Deacon John Ra was ordained a priest.

Members of the Russian Orthodox Church delegation had a sightseeing of Pyongyang and had working meetings with the leadership of the Orthodox Committee, during which the prospects of cooperation between the Moscow Patriarchate and the North Korean believers and public circles were outlined.

Metropolitan Kirill and the Russian Orthodox Church delegation will stay in North Korea till August 17.

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