His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets Serbian minister of foreign affairs



On April 16, 2021, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with Serbia's minister of foreign affairs **Nikola Selaković**, at the patriarchal and synodal residence in the St. Daniel Monastery.

They were joined by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations (DECR) and Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman.

From the Serbian side, there were also Mr. Dejan Nakic, personal secretary to the Patriarch of Serbia, and Mr. Branislav Radojcic, senior councilor of the Serbian embassy in Moscow.

His Holiness cordially welcomed the guest noting that he had met Mr. N. Selakovic in 2015, when he was Serbia's minister of justice.

Having congratulated Mr. Selakovic on his appointment to the present post, His Holiness wished him success as head of the Serbian foreign policy department.

The archpastor also noted that almost all the countries including Russia and Serbia encountered last year a dangerous coronavirus pandemic, saying, ‘Of course, it involves certain restrictions including in public activity. Nevertheless, life continues. Despite the pandemic, there are many good events going on. I think it shows that the modern society still has a certain charge of resources, knowledge, and education in order to resist such problem as an epidemic’.

His Holiness stated with regret that the coronavirus pandemic brought a heavy death toll including among bishops and priests. ‘In this connection’, he said, ‘I would like to remember especially His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije and our other Serbian brothers who died of this decease’.

‘I remember my visit to Serbia in 2014, my meeting with Patriarch Irinej and brotherly talks with hierarchs of the Serbian Orthodox Church’ His Holiness continued, ‘In this connection, I would like to stress that we give a special importance to our relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church. The relations between our two Churches, Russian and Serbian, is a very important and, perhaps, a decisive factor that defines our good relations between our two states. Precisely for this reason we give a special importance to the development of these relations’.

His Holiness also stated that in the Russian Orthodox Church the news about the death of His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia was taken with profound grief, as he was beloved in Serbia and in the whole Orthodox world.

‘For all of us Patriarch Irinej was an example of how a man in a venerable age can be active, physically strong and worthy of representing his people and his Church’ His Holiness noted.

In February 2021, the Serbian Orthodox Church gained a new Primate. According to Patriarch Kirill, the Russian Church was greatly gratified with the election of His Eminence Porfirije, Metropolitan of Zagreb-Ljubljana, to the old see of the Serbian First Hierarchs.

‘On the very day of the election, I called to His Holiness Porfirije and we had a heart talk. He assured me that all the right and good things, which had been done and laid into the relations between our two Churches, will be developed with his active involvement’, His Holiness said.

In his response, Mr. Nikola Selakovic thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the meeting, saying, ‘I am

grateful to you for this blessing to meet you again after over five years, now as the minister of foreign affairs. Our first meeting was one of the most important in my life. Today, as the minister of foreign affairs I have an opportunity to convey to you the warmest greetings and best regards from our President Alexandar Vucic and the Serbian people'.

Mr. N. Selakovic also thanked His Holiness for his warm words about the blissfully departed Patriarch Irinej of Serbia and about Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and the Littoral. 'Patriarch Irinej had a feature that distinguishes your service, Your Holiness, as well. Patriarch Irinej had a custom: whenever a question arose, he would always ask what the fraternal Russian Orthodox Church would say on it'.

As Mr N. Selakovic noted, the Serbian President A. Vucic and the blissfully departed Patriarch Irinej have established very good and stable relationships between the state and the Serbian Orthodox Church. 'Our newly elected Patriarch Porfirije will follow this path. The relations between the Republic of Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox Church are such as those established by Patriarch Irinej', he stressed.

Speaking about the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic, Mr Selakovic thanked the Russian Federation and President Vladimir Putin for the assistance rendered to the Serbian people. 'In many ways the personal relations of the presidents of our two countries Alexander Vucic and Vladimir Putin have helped to overcome the consequences of the pandemic in Serbia', he stated, 'Since yesterday, the production of Sputnik V has begun in our country. The closeness of our sister Churches of Russia and Serbia are conducive in many ways to friendly relations between our two states'.

They also discussed issues involved in the further cooperation between the two Churches in restoring a number of church facilities in Croatia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina. They also dealt with topics concerning the importance of traditional values in the life of the peoples of Russia and Serbia.

Mr. N. Selakovic expressed profound gratitude to the Russian Orthodox Church, Russia and Russian benefactors for the participation in adorning the St Sava Cathedral in Belgrade and expressed a hope that its consecration would become a great event in the life of the Serbian people.

DECR Communication Service

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