His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with speaker of South Korean Parliament



On May 22, 2021, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with the speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, Mr Park Byeong-seug.

Participating in the meeting from the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Sergiy of Singapore and South-Asia, Patriarchal Exarch for South-Asia, and Mr. D. Petrovsky of the DECR staff.

The high guest was accompanied by Mr. Lee Sok-bae, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Korea to the Russian Federation and Ms. Han Myung-hui, the wife of the speaker.

Participating in the meeting was also Mr. L. E. Slutsky, chairman of the State Duma Committee for International Affairs.

Warmly welcoming the speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea, His Holiness

expressed a hope that the guest would have good remembrances of his visit to Moscow, which is not only the capital city of a state but also its religious center.

As the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted, in spite of the fact that for most of the 20th century religion in then Soviet Union was forbidden and oppressed, the level of the people's religiosity is quite high because, among other things, the Orthodox religious tradition is an inalienable part of the cultural tradition of the people

"I can note with satisfaction that Russia, just as Korea, are countries with a rich spiritual tradition and a history of good relations", Patriarch Kirill stated, "Our peoples are known for their mutual care for each other. Religiosity, which is characteristic of both the Russian and the Korean people, has defined our views of human morality, relations between the sexes and the attitude of the younger generation to the older one. In other words, religious tradition lives a mark on the people's social life as well".

His Holiness underscored the special sensitivity of the two nations to the traditional morality and their recognition of the need to take into account the religious factor in human life.

His Holiness also spoke about the history of the Russian Orthodox Church's presence on the Korean Peninsula. As is known, the appearance of Orthodoxy in Korea is closely linked with the development of Russian-Korean relations in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Orthodox faith was brought to Korea by Russian Orthodox missionaries about 120 years ago - already in 1897, a Russian Ecclesiastical Mission was established there. "Unfortunately, the presence of Orthodoxy in Korea has become a certain hostage, a victim of the cold war which in the post-war years became a reality in our relations", His Holiness noted, "Because of these political conditions the Orthodox clergy had to leave Korea, And in 1955, the churches and all that was created by Russian Orthodox people in Korea were transferred to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. However, the Russian Orthodox Church has always remained interested in the development of religious life and the development of Orthodoxy in Korea".

An evidence to it is the establishment of a diocese of Korea, which since 2019 has functioned as part of the Patriarchate Exarchate of South-East Asia, which is an heir of the missionary work carried out by the Exarchate of East-Asia from 1946 to 1054, which included Orthodox communities in Korea.

His Holiness said that he was pleased to visit Korea in 1990, when the Conference on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of the Creation was held there under the aegis of the World Council of Churches. "It was my first experience of communication with Korea and I keep the warmest memories of that experience", he said.

Sixteen years later, in 2006, Patriarch Kirill, then head of the Department for External Church Relations,

visited North Korea and consecrated the first Orthodox church in it.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also spoke with gratitude about the help of Korean Christians with which a printing compound was built at the St. Sergius Monastery of the Holy Trinity to provide an opportunity for the Church to print her religious literature independently from the state.

“I would like to convey through you my respect and sympathy to all the Korean people - a people very industrious, well-organized and very successful in the economy and political and cultural life of their country. We pray that the forward movement of your country may continue and that the welfare of your people may grow”.

On his part, the speaker of the South Korean parliament said that he considered it a great honour to meet with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

“I know that the Russian Orthodox Church is the spiritual foundation of the Russian people and that she has made a great contribution to their cohesion for over one thousand years. The Church gives consolation, spiritual safety and stability to the people of Russia, especially in the present difficult situation caused by the pandemic”. Mr. Park Byeong-seug said. He made a special mention of the peace-making position of the Russian Orthodox Church including in problems of ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the unification of the Korean people, as well as of her participation in interreligious dialogues.

They considered a broad range of issues concerning the work of the Russian Orthodox Church in South Korea.

The Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea conveyed to Patriarch Kirill an official invitation to visit South Korea.

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