Primate of the Russian Church presides over plenary session of the 31st International Educational Christmas Readings



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On January 25, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia presided over the grand plenary session of the 31st International Educational Christmas Readings at the State Kremlin Palace on 'Global Challenges of Today and the Spiritual Choice of Man'.

The event was moderated by the chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Readings and head of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechism, Metropolitan Yevgeny of Yekaterinburg and Verkhotorye.

In the morning, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow, at which the participants in the Reading

worshipped.

Among the honorary guests at the opening of the Readings at the State Kremlin Palace were I. O. Shchegolev, presidential plenipotentiary in the Central Federal District; A. V. Yatskin, first vice-chairman of the Council of the Federation; P. O. Tolstoy, deputy chairman of the State Duma; V. A. Kolokoltsev, minister of the interior; V. N. Falkov, minister of higher education and science; S. S. Kravtsov, minister of education; Ms O. B. Lyubimova, minister of culture; Ye. S. Ivanov, secretary of state and deputy minister of foreign affairs; and A. N. Gorbenko, deputy mayor of Moscow for regional security and information policy.

Over 5000 people assembled in the hall. Among them were archpastors - members of the Holy Synod and the Supreme Church Council, heads of metropolises, diocesan bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, representatives of Local Orthodox Churches, members of the Interreligious Council in Russia, members of the International Christian Readings Organizing Committee; Presidential plenipotentiaries in federal districts, heads of the Russian federal services, leaders and representatives of federal and regional authorities, rectors and representatives of about 250 Russian and foreign higher education institutes, and heads of general education organizations.

There were also permanent members of the Holy Synod including Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan, head of the Metropolis of Central Asia; Metropolitan Varsonofy of Sankt Petersburg and Ladoga; Metropolitan Pavel of Krutitsy and Kolomna, vicar of the Metropolis of Moscow; Metropolitan Veniamin of Minsk and Zaslavsky, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus; Metropolitan Dionisy of Voskresensk, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for Eternal Church Relations.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill declared the meeting open, which was followed by the Anthem of the Russian Federation.

In his introductory remarks, Metropolitan Yevgeny of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturye said in particular,

‘By the decision of the Holy Synod and with your Primatial blessing, the International Educational Christmas Readings are devoted to the theme ‘Global Challenges of Today and the Spiritual Choice of Man’.

From September 2022 to this day, the regional stage of the Readings has taken place in the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church. Not fewer than a million people took part in the forum in all the regions of the country and in the dioceses abroad. It is evident from news, broadcasts and regional readings how deep has been the response evoked by the discussion on the announced theme. What we see is

that in the people, in large and small cities, in families an immunity has formed that ensures the rejection of evil, rejection of false values imposed on us. We believe that this immunity will help us protect our children and ourselves.

We hope that our joint efforts will help build a life on Earth according to the salvific commandments of God Incarnate. We believe our work during the present Readings will make its contribution to this good cause'.

A video devoted to the theme of the Reading was shown.

Then His Holiness Patriarch Kirill addressed the grand meeting.

A message of greeting from President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin was read out by Presidential plenipotentiary in the Central Federal District I.O. Shcheglov.

Minister of science and higher education V. N. Falkov read out a message of greeting from the Chairman of the Russian Federation Government M. V. Mishustin.

A massage of greeting from the Chair of the Council of the Federation, Ms. V. I. Matviyenko, was read out by the first vice-chairman of the Council of the Federation A. V. Yatskin.

The vice-chairman of the State Duma, P. O. Tolstoy read out a message of greeting from the chairman of the Lower Chamber of the Russian Parliament, V. V. Volodin.

The meeting was also addressed by the minister of education, S. S. Kravtsov, the minister of the interior, V. A. Kolokoltsev and the Minister of Culture Ms. O. B. Lyubimova.

A message of greeting on behalf of the minister of foreign affairs S. V. Lavrov was brought by the deputy minister Ye. S. Ivanov.

A message of greeting from Moscow Mayor S. S. Sobyanin was brought by his deputy for regional security and information policy A. N. Gorbenko.

In conclusion, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill summed up the results of the plenary session.

The meeting was broadcast by TV channels 'Rossiya 24', 'Soyouz', 'Spas', and by the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarchia ru., as well as on the portal of the International Christmas Readings and on the mobile application 'PravObraz'.

After the official part of the meeting, a concert took place, the Patriarchal Press Service reports.

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