



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill met with the Philippine Ambassador to Russia



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On February 21st, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' met with the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Russian Federation Igor G. Bailen.

The Ambassador of the Philippines was accompanied by the Deputy Head of Mission, Consul General Robert Oxan Ferrer and Consul Jose Carlo Grimaldo Morales.

Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, also participated in the meeting.

Welcoming the diplomatic representative of the Republic of the Philippines, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted that Russia has a special attitude toward this country. "The Philippines is a country with a deep Christian tradition," he mentioned. - The vast majority of Christians living there are of the Catholic faith, but there are also Orthodox Christians."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill recalled that the first visit of Russians to the Philippines occurred in the

mid-19th century: during the circumnavigation of the globe on the frigate "Pallada" the Philippines was visited and the Russian crew stepped on the Philippine soil for the first time. "This was the first page in the history of our relations. And already in 1934, the first Orthodox parish appeared in Manila," His Holiness noted. - Unfortunately, it did not exist for long - the small church was destroyed during the Japanese bombing. In 1949 there began a great resettlement of Russians from China, including to the Philippines, and the Russian colony there increased significantly, which meant that the activities of our Orthodox Church became more active. In the Philippines, in particular, Bishop John (Maximovich), an outstanding missionary, served and left his positive mark." As Patriarch Kirill noted, at that time more than 5,000 compatriots moved to the island of Tubabao and they felt the hospitality of the Filipino people.

His Holiness mentioned warmly his trip to the Philippines in 2002, when he was Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, "I had the opportunity to meet with Foreign Affairs Minister Blas Ople and Cardinal Jaime Sin and had a long and profound discussion with him, he introduced me to the Christian mission in the Philippines and explained much about the activities of the Catholic Church in your country. Since there was no Orthodox church in Manila at the time, I celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Ambassador's residence. I remember well that a great number of people gathered in the small room. Thus I had the opportunity to get in touch with the Russian Orthodox community of the Philippines.

Continuing the conversation, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' said that in 2018 the Russian Orthodox Church decided to create a Patriarchal Exarchate in Southeast Asia, stressing that the Philippine-Vietnamese diocese is a very important part of this exarchate.

As the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted, eight Filipino students are currently studying at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and three of them have been ordained.

Parishioners and priests of the Russian Orthodox Church consider it their duty to conduct social work, the Patriarch said, "On the islands of Tagaytay and Mindanao we actively work to help the poor, including distributing food and helping in other ways to support those in need".

"On the part of the Filipino people we meet a very friendly attitude, there have never been any conflicts," the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church noted. - We very much appreciate that Russian priests, who are present there in small numbers, are in a benevolent atmosphere. We hope to continue this ministry in the Philippines in close cooperation with the Catholic Church of the Philippines and to contribute to the development of Philippine-Russian relations".

In response, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Philippines to the Russian Federation Igor G. Bailen thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for the opportunity to meet and talk with him.

The diplomat told the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church about his meeting with Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, which took place on October 31st, 2022.

He also touched upon the topics of cooperation with the Philippine-Vietnamese Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, thanked for the opportunity for students from the Republic of the Philippines to study at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, and asked for prayer for the people of his country and the Filipinos living in Russia.

*Photos have been provided by the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia*

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