



## **A session of the ROCOR Synod of Bishops and Western European Bishops' Meeting is held during a Primate's visit to Germany**



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The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia held its regular teleconference on Thursday, 4 May, 2023, chaired by its Primate, His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Eastern America and New York.

Making his first First-Hierarchical visit to Germany, the hierarchs of the ROCOR's dioceses in Europe gathered together with His Eminence at the Convent of St Elisabeth the Grand Duchess in Buchendorf, both for the regular session of the Holy Synod — in which the other Synod members participated via video conferencing from their dioceses in other parts of the world — as well as for time of monastic fellowship, common prayer, and discussion of spiritual and pastoral matters relating to the life of the Church Abroad in Europe.

Present in person in Germany were Metropolitan Nicholas, His Eminence Metropolitan Mark of Berlin and Germany, Ruling Bishop of the German Diocese; His Grace Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe, Ruling Bishop of the Diocese of Great Britain and Western Europe; and the Vicar Bishops of both dioceses: His Grace Bishop Alexander of Vevey (Vicar of Bishop Irenei in Western Europe) and His Grace Bishop Job of Stuttgart (Vicar of Metropolitan Mark in Germany). Participating in the meeting of the Holy Synod via video conference were the other regular Synod members: His Eminence Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America, Secretary of the Holy Synod; His Eminence Archbishop Gabriel of Montreal and Canada; His Eminence Archbishop Peter of Chicago and Mid-America; and His Grace Bishop Theodosy of Seattle, Vicar of Archbishop Kyrill in Western America and Deputy Secretary of the Holy Synod. The chief recording secretary of the Synod, Archpriest Serafim Gan, was also present in Germany.

During its session, the Synod members and invited Vicar Bishops discussed a host of matters relating to the life and administration of the Church Abroad during the present difficult times. Special prayers were offered and discussion held on the situation of the long-suffering faithful and hierarchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, enduring grievous persecutions in its own homeland; and the Synod members reiterated their longstanding stance against the bloodshed of war and prayers for the swift end to armed conflict in the region. At the Divine Services, prayers were lifted up for His Beatitude Metropolitan Onouphry, head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and all his brethren and spiritual children.

His Grace Bishop Irenei of London and Western Europe gave a report on the status of various matters in inter-Orthodox relations, pertaining to the Church Abroad's fraternal relations with other parts of the Orthodox Church throughout the world. Reports were also heard on the Church's missionary endeavors in various parts of the world; on the internal life of the Church's dioceses; on the activities of the Fund For Assistance (FFA); and on a host of other pastoral matters.

Of special joy to those Hierarchs gathered in Germany was the possibility to pray together before the miraculous Kursk-root icon of the Mother of God, which was brought from New York to Germany by the First Hierarch, together with the relics of the Kiev Saints and a host of others, brought to Germany from Geneva by arrangement of Bishop Irenei and conveyed from Switzerland by Bishop Alexander and Archdeacon Dometian. The Hierarchs were thus able to offer their fervent prayers to the Theotokos before her icon, in the presence of the sacred relics of the saints who shone forth in the very Ukrainian lands now so deeply in need of their heavenly intercessions.