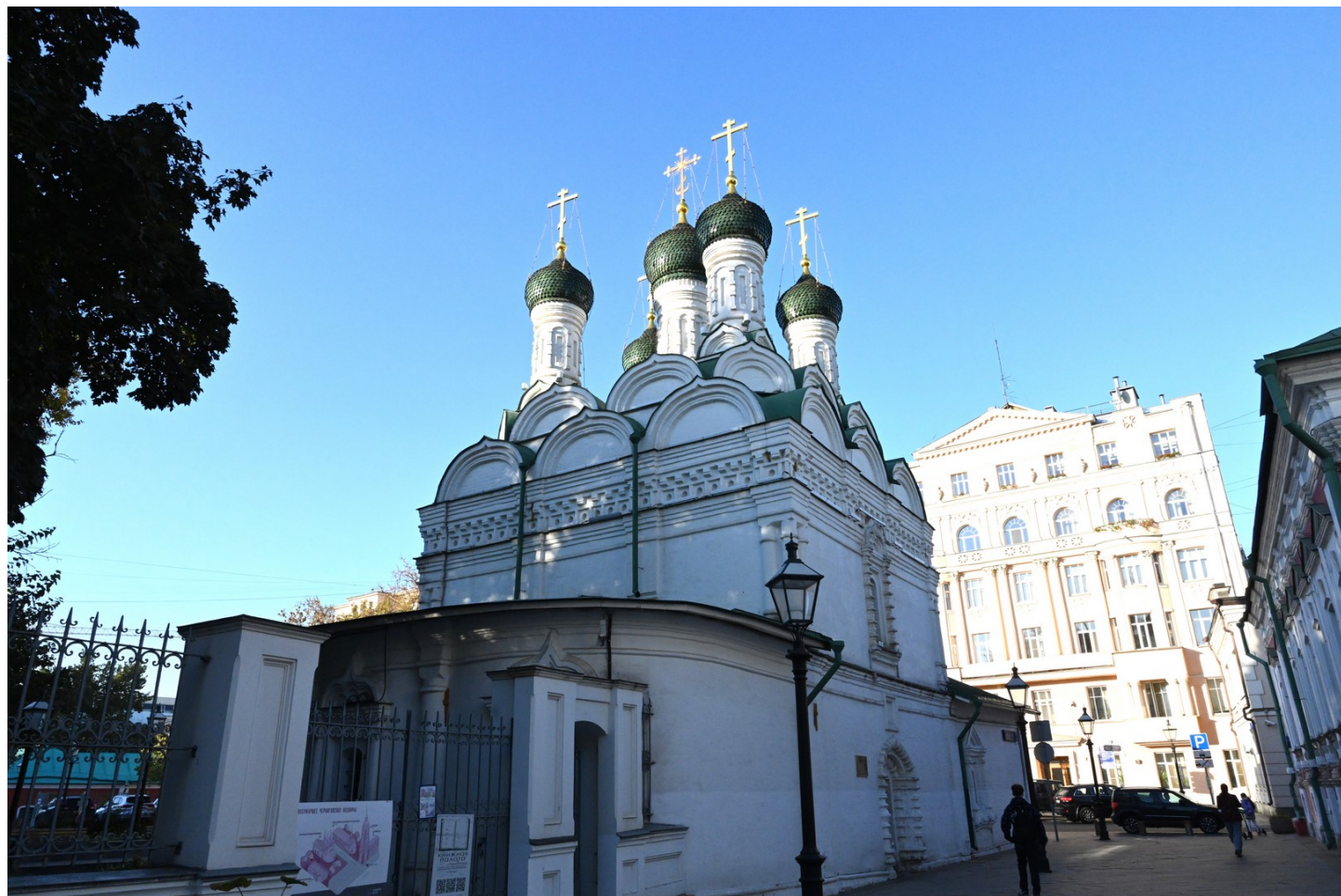




**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
Department for External Church Relations

## **DECR Chairman takes part in festivities for the beginning of the academic year at the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute.**



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On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024 ceremonies were held for the commencement of the academic year at the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute (SCMPI).

According to tradition the official part of the event was preceded by a festive celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Holy Martyrs Michael and Theodore of Chernigov. His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia blessed the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony to head the Liturgy.

Concelebrating with the metropolitan were: archpriest Maxim Kozlov, rector of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute and rector of the Patriarchal metochion in Chernigov Lane; archpriest

Nikolai Balashov, advisor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and rector of the Church of the Resurrection at Uspenky Vrazhek; archpriest Sergei Seleznyov, dean of the Zamoskvorechie ecclesiastical district in Moscow and rector of the Church of the Archangel Michael in Ovchiniki; archimandrite Afanasy (Sokolov), rector of the Minsk Theological Academy; hegumen Ioann (Ludischev), acting rector of Sretensky Theological Seminary; hegumen Daniil (Vasilenko), acting deputy rector for pastoral care at the Moscow Theological Academy; archpriest Dmitry Sizonenko, head of the international section of the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy; archpriest Nikolai Lischenyuk, deputy chairman of the DECR and rector of the Church of the Joy of All Afflicted Icon on Bolshaya Ordynka Street in Moscow; archpriest Alexei Marchenko, head of the doctoral studies section at the SCMPI and acting rector of the Church Saint Clement of Rome in the Zamoskvorechie area of Moscow; and clerics from the churches in Chernigov Lane, as well as colleagues, teachers and students of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute.

The homily was given by the head of doctoral studies at the SCMPI archpriest Alexei Marchenko.

At the conclusion of the service the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony congratulated all those present on the occasion of the patronal feast day. A group photograph was taken on the territory of the Church of the Holy Martyrs Michael and Theodore of Chernigov.

The official part of the festivities took part in the assembly hall of the SCMPI and began with a word of greetings from archpriest Maxim Kozlov, who said: "I congratulate you all on the occasion of commencement day at the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute. His Holiness the Patriarch decreed that this day should be day for postgraduate studies and I am very pleased that today all of our fraternal Academies have been represented here. I am especially pleased to greet the rector of the Higher School of Economics Nikita Yurievich Anisimov, the rector of a institute of higher learning with which we cooperate on developing studies for masters' degrees. The Higher School of Economics is our senior partner which sets the standard for postgraduate studies in Russia."

Metropolitan Anthony congratulated the teachers, students and colleagues of the SCMPI on commencement day. The metropolitan reminded those present of the stages of life through which the Russian Orthodox Church had passed upon the end of the period of repression in the twentieth century: "At first new churches were opened, church buildings in a desecrated and terrible state were returned to the Russian Church. The dioceses lacked priests, bishops were forced to ordain to the priesthood men who had no theological education but who had reputable Christian lives. Then in Russian new educational establishments were opened - church schools and seminaries, which attracted young people who wanted to receive a theological education. In time the number of priests without a basic theological education was reduced to nil, and today in most of the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church there serve priests who have graduated from either a theological seminary or academy."

The metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony noted the special and unique role of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute as this place of learning allows students to attain a new level in receiving theological knowledge.

Guests at the festivities also addressed their greetings to those present.

The rector of the national research institute the Higher School of Economics Nikita Anisimov noted that the cooperation between the SCMPI and HSE had been continuing for twelve years: “We have a joint masters’ degree programme with seventy-nine graduates, among whom twenty-three are colleagues at the Moscow Patriarchy and Synodal institutions. The joint project continues to develop and moves ahead: this year as part of the project for support the historical Russian regions clerics from the diocese of Luhansk were included in the programme.” Mr. Anisimov commented that the joint realisation of these projects should enable development and be of benefit to young people, researchers and scholars.

The acting rector of Sretensky Theological Academy hegumen Ioann (Ludishev) congratulated the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute on the occasion of commencement day and personally archpriest Maxim Kozlov: “At one time you were rector of the Sretensky Theological Academy and at that time the foundation was laid at our Academy for postgraduate studies. The project which you then started has now produced its first postgraduate students. We wish your students, all the professorial staff and you personally in your ministry God’s blessed aid.”

The rector of the Saint Cyril of Turov Theological Academy in Minsk archimandrite Afanasy (Sokolov) read out greetings on behalf of the professorial and teaching staff and colleagues of the Theological Academy. Father Afanasy noted that the “Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute is not only one of the leading educational theological establishments of the Russian Orthodox Church which turns out qualified professionals, but is also a major centre for ecclesiastical scholarship which engages in theological thought and develops intellectual curiosity.”

The head of the international section of the Saint Petersburg Theological Academy archpriest Dimitry Sizonenko read out greetings from the rector of the theological school the bishop of Peterhof Siluanus on the occasion of the commencement day at the SCMPI. “Your zeal in study, striving for spiritual perfection and ministry to God and neighbour is worthy of the deepest respect and gratitude,” the message of greetings noted. “The teachers who have put their heart and soul and bodily strength to the upbringing and education of future church scholars and students receiving knowledge with the sincere desire to serve the Church - all of you are an integral part of a great cause.”

Greetings from the rector of the Moscow Theological Academy the bishop of Sergiev Posad and

Dmitrov Cyril were read out by the acting deputy rector of the MTA for pastoral work hegumen Danill (Vasilenko): "It is my wish that you use the present time and opportunities wisely. The time for study will fly by and, having graduated, you will serve the Church, make discoveries in your research, introduce new projects, lead, catechize and enlighten people. Any path that you have chosen may and should become a path to the spiritual transformation of the soul," the address to the students states.

A speech was then delivered by professor of the SCMPCI V. N. Katasonov on the topic of religion and culture.

There was also held an awards ceremony for the teachers and colleagues of the Saints Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate Institute.

The official part of the commencement day was rounded off by a concert given by the choir of the Patriarchal metochion on Chernigov Lane.

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