



## A meeting of the Primates of the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches has taken place



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On April 22, 2025, a meeting between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia was held at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow.

Representing the Russian Orthodox Church at the meeting were: Metropolitan Antony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Alexy of Ramensk, Personal Secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, Advisor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, Deputy Chairman of the DECR; Hieromonk Feofan (Lukyanov), Head of the DECR Protocol Section; and A.Yu. Khoshev, a staff member of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Orthodox Relations.

His Holiness the Patriarch of Serbia was accompanied by: Archbishop Irinej of Novi Sad and Metropolitan of Bačka; Bishop Stefan of Remeziana, Representative of the Serbian Patriarch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Archimandrite Hariton (Pavlica), Abbot of the Kovilj Monastery; Archpriest Georgije Stojisavljević, Chief of the Serbian Patriarch's Office; Protodeacon Radomir Vručinić, Rector of the Saint Sava Seminary in Belgrade; Protodeacon Radoica Žagran; Hierodeacon Justin (Živanić), a monastic of the Kovilj Monastery; Deacon Ivan Vasilyevich; as well as subdeacons D. Nakić and V. Elič.

Before the meeting, the Primates of the two Churches visited the cross church of the Patriarchal Residence. Welcoming the distinguished guest with heartfelt warmth and a sense of fraternal solidarity, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill emphasized that in the relations between the Russian Church and the Serbian Church, there has never been even a fleeting shadow of negativity, but rather constant mutual understanding, love, and fraternal support.

"This is no coincidence: not only are our peoples close in language, culture, and history, but both our Churches have suffered greatly throughout their histories, including due to unjust persecutions in the 20th century," His Holiness continued. "Both the historical experience rooted in the depths of time and the experience of the past century unite our Churches in understanding what pastoral ministry to modern people should look like today. Although the persecutions of totalitarian regimes are no longer present, what is happening today at the intersection of church life and secular life also poses certain dangers. People are presented with false ideals and misguided goals focused on achieving high levels of comfort and material well-being. At the same time, the spiritual and moral values associated with Christianity are often pushed to the periphery. Therefore, the joint missionary and theological efforts of our fraternal Churches are greatly needed today."

His Holiness wished Patriarch Porfirije God's assistance in his primatial ministry for the benefit of the Serbian Church, the Serbian people, and all of Orthodoxy.

"I am glad that we are now together here in Moscow, rejoicing in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the resurrection of the human race and of each of us—if we have faith, humility, and hope in God. Temptations and problems always exist, but the Resurrection of Christ is a true and unchanging fact, now and ever and unto the ages of ages," said the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church in his response.

Patriarch Porfirije emphasized that the good relations between the Russian and Serbian Churches serve as a positive example for all Orthodox Christians. "Thank you for your love. May God grant you good health and His help, as well as to your fellow laborers—the bishops, priests, and all the Russian Orthodox people. Christ is Risen!" said His Holiness, addressing His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow

and All Rus'.

During the subsequent fraternal discussions, Patriarch Kirill particularly emphasized the significance of the Serbian Primate's visit to Moscow during Bright Week. "This meeting is unique in that we are together glorifying the Risen Savior, and I believe this deepens the understanding that the relationship between our Churches is special. This is connected to history, the cultural closeness of our peoples, but also to our shared purpose," said Patriarch Kirill. "Your Holiness and I have established regular fraternal communication, yet a personal meeting and a heartfelt conversation always hold special significance."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church warmly congratulated His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia on being awarded an honorary doctorate by the Moscow Theological Academy. "This decision by the Academic Council of our oldest theological school testifies to the high authority of Your Holiness as a theologian and a church leader," stated His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. "I am aware of your outstanding personal contribution to the development of theological and religious education in your country, your deep involvement in this field, as well as your selfless efforts to spiritually enlighten your flock."

He also noted the highly significant contribution of His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije in strengthening collaboration between the two Churches in the field of theological education and student exchange.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' expressed deep respect for his interlocutor as a "wise Primate and the closest brother among all the Local Orthodox Churches, because our Churches, like others, are bound by a common faith, but also by a shared historical path, culture, and, to a large extent, a shared perspective on what has happened and is happening in the world."

The conversation noted that a number of the late predecessors of Patriarch Porfirije on the throne of the Serbian Primates—Patriarchs Gavriilo (†1950) and German (†1991)—had previously been awarded honorary doctorates by the theological academies of the Russian Orthodox Church. "In conferring this honorary degree upon you, I see a continuation of this glorious tradition, which strengthens the relationship between our Churches," stated His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

For his part, His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia expressed gratitude for the honorary title, noting that he sees it as "an expression of love between our Churches and our peoples."

"Theology, for us, is life itself, and I believe that education is the most important aspect of the Church's life," emphasized the Primate of the Serbian Church, addressing His Holiness Patriarch Kirill. "As you mentioned, in the modern world, not only non-spiritual but often outright anti-Gospel values are being embraced. We know that some theological schools sometimes come under the influence of worldly

opinions and certain ideologies, often anti-Christian ones. Therefore, it is crucial that theological education and our spiritual schools remain under the constant attention of the Church, and that this is not merely academic education disconnected from church life and worship. As the ancients said: 'If you wish to be a theologian, you must pray; if you pray, then you are a theologian.'"

As His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' noted, by awarding the honorary degree to Patriarch Porfirije, the Russian Orthodox Church honors him as an outstanding church leader and theologian. "You combine theological work and church teaching with practical pastoral leadership, shepherding your Church and your people," said His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

The discussion continued, covering a wide range of topics related to pan-Orthodox unity and inter-church relations, as well as other matters of mutual interest.

At the end of the meeting, the Primates of the Russian and Serbian Churches exchanged commemorative gifts.

*Photo: Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'.*

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