



Primates of the Russian and Serbian Orthodox Churches meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin



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On April 22, President of Russia Vladimir Putin met at the Kremlin with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia.

They were joined by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, and Metropolitan Irinej of Novi Sad and Bačka, a hierarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The head of the Russian state cordially greeted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije and congratulated them on Easter. In memory of this Feast of Feasts, Serbian Patriarch gave an Easter egg to President Putin.

During the talk, the President noted that "Russian-Serbian relations have always been special, even today, because we are bound by strong and deep spiritual roots." He emphasized, "the Serbian Orthodox Church makes a significant contribution to strengthening relations between our peoples, who traditionally maintain the warmest, closest and most trusting alliance relations."

His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije congratulated President Putin on the feast with Easter greeting 'Christ is Risen!'

His Holiness gratefully noted the efforts undertaken by the Russian President for preserving traditional values in the lives of people, and emphasized the importance of the foundations of values which are largely formed by faith. "Everything depends on faith; our life, our words and other things are determined by how strong our faith is," said the Primate of the Serbian Church.

He added that the Russian and Serbian Churches have been linked by good relations, brotherly love and mutual assistance.

He also noted that the people of Serbia have community feelings to the people of Russia and quoted his predecessor, the ever-memorable Patriarch Irinej, who used to say: "Our small boat sailing in rough seas must always be tied to the great Russian ship."

The Primate of the Serbian Church expressed gratitude for support and position of Russia on Kosovo, Metohija and the Republika Srpska within Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for the protection of the rights of the faithful in Montenegro. He added that he celebrated an Easter festive service at the Patriarchate of Peć monastery in Kosovo, the spiritual center and 'capital' of the Serbian Church.

His Holiness conveyed greetings from the President of Serbia to the head of the Russian state.

"May God grant you strength and wisdom. Our prayers are always with you, and I hope that the Lord is helping you," said Patriarch Porfirije.

He also emphasized the importance of preserving the identity and spiritual culture of the Serbian people in the face of modern challenges.

President Putin mentioned great efforts undertaken by the Russian Orthodox Church and its Primate, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', "to strengthen our traditional values and spiritual foundations. Whenever we meet, we recall and speak about our Orthodox brethren – this reflects the position of His Holiness the Patriarch," the President said.

.In continuation of the talk, Patriarch Kirill noted that among all the Local Orthodox Churches, the Serbian Church is closest to the Russian Church – in culture, language, and historical path.

His Holiness added, "This love for the Russian people and for the Russian Church is organically woven in the culture of Serbia and the Serbian people. For us, they are our closest friends, our brothers – in spirit and in terms of life's philosophy. This is very important. We have remained of one mind at all times. Whenever discussions arise on inter-Orthodox platforms, we always feel the support of the Serbian Church."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said that the Serbs and the Serbian Church come face-to-face with the Western world, which can provide a lot of useful information in scientific research and culture. However, things that are happening to human morality in the West today can hardly be called as anything other than the work of the devil. "Why the work of the devil? Because the task of the devil is to make the man stop distinguishing between good and evil. Church says, 'You shall not do it.' And the word of God says the same. However, the modern secular culture says, 'Why not? Anyone is free to do as he wants to do; it is just a matter of free choice.' This approach destroys the moral foundations of human existence and horrible civilizational catastrophes may follow, because if the integrity of the human personality is destroyed, everything collapses eventually. The Russian Orthodox Church, as you are aware, stands on these positions, and we uphold them on international platforms. However, we certainly need good allies. Of all the Local Orthodox Churches the Serbian Church has always been with us. I am not saying this because His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije is here today, but I speak from my own experience. Serbia is the country that has never betrayed Russia. I will not mention other Slavic countries that came under the influence of powerful political and military forces and lost good relations with Russia for a time. Serbia has always been with us. That is why today's meeting makes me so happy," said His Holiness Patriarch Kirill.

He also expressed hope for the development of relations between the Russian and Serbian Churches and between Serbia and Russia.

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