



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with delegation of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa



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On August 27, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' received the delegation of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa headed by Metropolitan Konstantin of Cairo and North Africa.

Attending the meeting held in the Patriarchal Hall of Christ the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow were Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Bishop Alexy of Ramenskoye, personal secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, advisor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Archpriest Igor Vyzhanov, deputy chairman of the DECR; and members of the delegation of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa, namely, Priest Georgy Maximov, chairman of the Exarchate's Missionary Department; Archpriest Tigry Khachatryan, assistant to the Exarch for religious education and catechism; deans of church districts in South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria, Cameroon, the

Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Burundi, Malawi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda, Madagascar, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, and Burkina Faso, as well as clergy of the Exarchate serving in Angola, Gabon, Zambia, and Mauritius, and Mr. Yegor Skopenko, executive director of the Foundation for the Support of Christian Culture and Heritage.

Before the meeting, the guests from Africa had a sightseeing tour of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' reports.

At the beginning of the meeting, Metropolitan Konstantin greeted the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and said: "Your Holiness, our Holy Master and Father! A great tragedy has befallen Orthodoxy, when the Ecumenical Patriarch, and after him several other Primates of the Churches, committed an amazing and unexpected act. They recognized the schism in Ukraine. Many of our brother priests serving in different places, Africa including, got embarrassed. When the Patriarch of Alexandria entered into Eucharistic communion with the schismatics, these priests reached out to you. Your Holiness, you and the Holy Synod showed paternal pastoral love and took our African brothers, Orthodox priests, under the omophorion of the Russian Orthodox Church."

"The number of these priests has greatly increased, because throughout Orthodox Africa many wish to be a part of the Russian Orthodox Church rather than of the schism. Today in this hall you are receiving deans of the Dioceses of Northern and Southern Africa of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa of the Russian Orthodox Church. They are senior priests in their own countries who have come to you as to their father. There is one deanery in some countries, as, for example, in the Republic of South Africa, while there are ten deaneries in Kenya, three in Uganda, two in Cameroon and two in Tanzania. That is, more than two hundred and sixty priests and a great number of Orthodox faithful in Orthodox Africa are your children, who commemorate you at every Liturgy."

"Your Holiness, we are eager to hear your paternal primatial word addressed to our Russian Orthodox Africa," said Metropolitan Konstantin.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill welcomed all those gathered and said, "It is a great joy for me to see you all, to talk with you and to assure you that the Russian Orthodox Church has begun its missionary work in Africa quite selflessly and without seeking any benefit."

"Russia has a long-standing friendship with many African countries, because our country has never participated in the slave trade and has never had an African colony. Russia is the largest country in the world with enormous resources, and it has never sought to take African resources. This is how it differs from most European countries. You know well that in the late 19th century, and especially in the 20th century, Russia helped African peoples gain independence and freedom, thus putting an end to their

exploitation by the colonizers and getting an opportunity for free and dynamic development. The struggle against colonialism has certainly brought our country and the African continent closer together."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said that one of the forms of supporting African Christians has been training of personnel in Russia, where representatives of many African states used to study and are studying in secular and religious educational institutions.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill gave a detailed account of the reasons for which the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church deemed it necessary to establish the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa. These are the "violation of the fundamental canonical rules and norms by which the Orthodox Church should be guided" by Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria and his "fatal decision" to enter into communion with a schismatic structure, thus bringing the hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria to a de facto falling into schism. After that, many clergymen from Africa, who did not want to participate in schismatic acts, asked the Russian Orthodox Church to accept them into its jurisdiction.

His Holiness continued to say, "My dear brothers, I am very impressed by the courage and perseverance you have displayed along this road. I know that many have had to endure hardships, attacks in the media, threats, and even hostile actions for their choice of fidelity to canonical Orthodoxy... As it is, you have not wavered and have not turned from the chosen road. I wish to thank all of you and all African priests and faithful for your labours and, most importantly, for your fidelity to the canons of the Orthodox Church. I would like to urge all the clergy of the Exarchate of Africa to stand firm in their faith and never fear any threats."

"We do want to see the Orthodox Church in Africa strong and capable of uniting the people of the continent on the basis of the Orthodox faith. I believe that Orthodoxy in Africa has high potential and a great future. It cannot be otherwise! But for this to happen, we all must work hard and well," His Holiness Patriarch Kirill emphasized and named the main areas of further work, such as the formation of parish communities, development of catechism, religious education, and social activities. The Primate noted in particular the significance of the positive example given by pastors to laypersons and added that "clergymen should be consistent with high ideals of Christian morality not only in their service to the Church, but also in their private and family life."

Having shared memories of his numerous visits to the African continent, His Holiness concluded his speech with the words, "Dear brothers, upon all of you I invoke God's blessings and rejoice at our meeting today. I expect that your experience and your understanding of the situation would enrich me."

Metropolitan Konstantin thanked His Holiness on behalf of the delegation of the Patriarchal Exarchate

of Africa for the invitation to come to Moscow, told him about divine services and events during the visit, and thanked the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations and the Foundation for the Support of Christian Culture and Heritage thanks to which assistance seventy-one students from Africa are studying in nine theological schools of the Russian Orthodox Church, and many other initiatives are being implemented.

Then the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church gave elaborate answers to the questions of the African clergy.

At the end of the talk, the clergymen of the Patriarchal Exarchate presented His Holiness with memorable gifts, including a staff made by wood carvers from Uganda and an icon of the Theotokos of the Passion made in the intarsia technique by craftsmen from the island of Mauritius.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented the African clergymen with his book "Freedom and Responsibility" in English. Also, they received commemorative medals.

The Primate of the Russian Church presented church awards to the clergymen of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa.

In consideration of Metropolitan Konstantin's diligent archpastoral labours, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented him with patriarchal cross and panagia.

His Holiness honoured some clergymen of the Dioceses of Northern and Southern Africa of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa by his patriarchal attention and blessed them with liturgical awards for their zealous service to the Holy Church.

Patriarchal Cross with decorations was presented to:

- Archpriest Daniil Lugovoy, rector of the Cathedral of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Johannesburg and dean of the parishes in the South African Diocese in the Republic of South Africa;
- Archpriest Dimitry Matienko, rector of the Church of St. Mauritius the Martyr in the Republic of Mauritius;
- Archimandrite Sotirios (Matumbi), dean of the Central church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Archimandrite Philaret (Kimaro), dean of the Central church district in the Republic of Tanzania;

- Archpriest Tigry Khachatryan, cleric of the Diocese of Kursk, assistant to the Patriarchal Exarch of Africa for religious education and catechism.

The right to wear a golden pectoral cross was given to:

- Priest Baselios Vaicha, dean of the Nyeri church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Titus Kipngeni, dean of the Nandi church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Theoklitus Kitinji, dean of the Meru church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Barnabas Njaria, dean of the Eastern church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Arsenius Chitva, dean of the Kakamega church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Nikanoros Shilesi, dean of the Vihiga church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Peter Lutomia, dean of the Lugari church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Potapios Chasia, dean of the Migori church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Angelos Oribe, dean of the Homabay church district in the Republic of Kenya;
- Priest Thomas Ssebirande, dean of the Central church district in the Republic of Uganda;
- Hieromonk Silouan (Brown), dean of the Eastern church district in the Republic of Uganda;
- Priest Nikolai Ramarusun, dean of the Southern church district in the Republic of Madagascar;
- Priest Basil Randrianaivo, dean of the Northern church district in the Republic of Madagascar;
- Archpriest Peter Majune, dean of the Northern church district in the United Republic of Tanzania;
- Priest Joachim Bakali, dean in the Republic of Malawi;

- Priest Nicholas Musoya, dean in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- Priest Silouan Nkunku, dean in the Republic of the Congo;
- Priest Sergius Voemava, dean in the Central African Republic;
- Priest Paul Atangana, dean of the Central church district in the Republic of Cameroon;
- Priest Herman Mbarga, dean of the Western church district in the Republic of Cameroon;
- Priest Daniel Agbaza, dean in the Republic of Nigeria;
- Priest Parthenius Dansu, dean of the West African church district;
- Priest Demetrios Ntahonshiki, dean in the Republic of Burundi;
- Priest Peter Bikamumpaka, dean in the Republic of Rwanda;
- Priest Athanasius Ebelebélé, senior priest in the Gabonese Republic;
- Priest Seraphim Lumanadio, senior priest in the Republic of Angola.

His Holiness addressed the African clergy, saying, “I wholeheartedly congratulate you all on your awards and rejoice at the large number of the awarded priests who serve with dignity in Africa. I wish you all God's aid and spiritual and physical strength to continue your service on the African continent for many years to come. May the Lord keep you safe! ”

The Patriarchal Exarchate of Africa was formed by the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on December 29, 2021. At that time, there were four priests of the Russian Church in Africa, serving in five parishes in four countries. Currently, there are three hundred and thirty-two parishes of the Patriarchal Exarchate in thirty-six countries on the African continent with over two hundred and seventy priests and deacons. With the blessing of His Holiness, thirty clergymen, deans of church districts and senior priests representing twenty-two African countries, were making a pilgrimage to Russia from August 21 to 29, 2025.

Photo by the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'

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