



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill took part in the 14th Christmas Parliamentary Meetings at the Federation Council



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On January 29, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' and the Chairwoman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, V.I. Matvienko, took part in the plenary session of the 14th Christmas Parliamentary Meetings entitled "Education and Morality: Formation of the Individual and the Challenges of the Times." The event was held in the building of the Federation Council in Moscow within the framework of the 34th International Christmas Educational Readings, the Patriarch's Press Service reports.

Prior to the plenary session, thematic round tables were held at the Federation Council: "Upbringing and Education as Instruments for the Formation of the Individual in Modern Society" (co-chairs: Chairwoman of the Federation Council Committee on Science, Education and Culture L.S. Gumerova,

and Chairman of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechesis, Metropolitan of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturye Evgeny); “The Formation of a Modern Socio-State Model for Educating a Citizen and a Patriot (Analysis of the Experience of Interaction Between State and Religious Institutions)” (co-chairs: First Deputy Chairwoman of the Federation Council Committee on Constitutional Legislation and State Building L.N. Glebova and Chairman of the Synodal Missionary Department, Archbishop Savva of Zelenograd); “Church, Government, and Society: Support for Participants of the Special Military Operation and Their Families” (co-chairs: First Deputy Chairwoman of the Federation Council Committee on Social Policy Zh.Yu. Chefranova, member of the Federation Council Committee on Defense and Security A.L. Derkach, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies and Chairman of the Synodal Committee for Cooperation with the Cossacks, Metropolitan of Stavropol and Nevinnomyssk Kirill, and Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry, Archpriest Mikhail Potokin).

In the foyer on the first floor, a concert was held by the choir of participants of the contemporary church art festival “To See and Hear,” conducted by artistic director Anatoly Zhukov.

Upon the arrival of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Federation Council, he was welcomed by: Chairwoman of the upper chamber of the Parliament of the Russian Federation V.I. Matvienko; First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation A.V. Yatskin; Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation P.O. Tolstoy; Chairwoman of the Federation Council Committee on Science, Education and Culture L.S. Gumerova; Chairman of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechesis and Chairman of the Organizing Committee of the International Christmas Educational Readings, Metropolitan of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturye Evgeny.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and V.I. Matvienko viewed the exhibition of children’s drawings “The Beauty of God’s World,” organized in the first-floor foyer.

On the second floor of the Federation Council building, His Holiness viewed the exhibition “People of the Church: The History of One Family,” dedicated to the 80th anniversary of His Holiness, as well as the exhibition of the project “The Return of Restored Icons of Donbas.” The project was organized by the Federation Council jointly with Vladimir State University named after A.G. and N.G. Stoletov. The exhibition presents restored icons from the Peter and Paul Cathedral of the city of Lugansk. The project involves students of the Department of Design, Fine Arts, and Restoration of Vladimir State University from the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics, Perm Krai, and the Arkhangelsk, Vladimir, Nizhny Novgorod, and Ivanovo regions.

A conversation between V.I. Matvienko and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill took place in the Reception Hall.

This was followed by a ceremonial session of the Parliamentary Meetings in the Grand Hall of the Federation Council.

Seats at the presidium were occupied by: Chairwoman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation V.I. Matvienko; His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'; First Deputy Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation A.V. Yatskin; Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation P.O. Tolstoy; Metropolitan of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturye Evgeny; and Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation, Chairman of the Russian Military Historical Society V.R. Medinsky.

Participants in the session included parliamentarians—members of the Federation Council and the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation; representatives of the Presidential Administration, the Government of the Russian Federation, federal executive authorities, and constituent entities of the Russian Federation; representatives of public, scientific, and educational organizations; cultural figures; permanent members of the Holy Synod; heads of metropolitan districts; hierarchs and clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church; and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches and traditional confessions of the Russian Federation.

Among those present were, in particular: Head of the Central Asian Metropolitan District, Metropolitan of Tashkent and Uzbekistan Vikenty; Patriarchal Vicar of the Moscow Metropolis, Metropolitan of Krutitsy and Kolomna Pavel; Manager of Affairs of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan of Voskresensk Grigory; Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk Antony; Chairman of the Financial and Economic Administration of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan of Vladimir and Suzdal Nikandr; Representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', Metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon; and Chairman of the Synodal Department for Relations Between the Church and Society and the Media, V.R. Legoida.

The meeting was opened with a welcoming address by Chairwoman of the Federation Council V.I. Matvienko.

According to her, the Parliamentary Meetings are a special event in the public, cultural, and spiritual life of the country and one of the most vivid manifestations of cooperation between the state and the Church. "Each time on this platform we raise the most pressing and relevant topics. We speak about

family values, about the upbringing of youth, about overcoming the humanitarian and civilizational challenges faced by our country and the entire world,” said V.I. Matvienko. These issues require deep and comprehensive reflection.

The theme of educational activity and the formation of the moral foundations of the individual in the context of new challenges is strategic. “Issues of education and moral upbringing of the individual, in their significance and importance, are comparable to ensuring the sovereignty and defense capability of the country. Our goal is to do everything possible, despite all challenges, to preserve in the country that moral and value-based foundation which for centuries has constituted the basis of the national code of many generations of Russians,” the website of the Federation Council quotes V.I. Matvienko as saying.

V.I. Matvienko emphasized that spiritual foundations are being undermined in virtually all Western countries. “It is no coincidence that more and more believers and morally strong people are moving to Russia, unwilling for their children, from nursery age, to have ideas of gender permissiveness and Russophobia imposed on them,” she explained.

At the same time, the speaker of the Federation Council added, our country draws strength from its millennia-old history and its richest culture, which is largely rooted in the Orthodox tradition. The most important moral lessons are contained in the lives of the saints and literary monuments that have come down to us: “Among our main value guidelines is the unity of representatives of all the peoples and confessions of Russia. This is our great strength and, I would say, a historical advantage.”

The Chairwoman of the Federation Council highly praised the work of the Russian Orthodox Church and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill in the field of education. As an example, she cited the Church’s participation in the preparation of modern history textbooks, as well as the inclusion of the subject “Spiritual and Moral Culture of Russia” in the school curriculum.

“Undoubtedly, the first and most important lessons of moral behavior, love and faith, mutual assistance and mercy are laid in the family, which is sometimes called the ‘small Church.’ That is why, when speaking about moral values, we always consider this category inseparably from family values,” V.I. Matvienko emphasized.

According to her, this includes the aspiration to achieve the happiness of motherhood and fatherhood as soon as possible and to create a close-knit, strong, and large family: “Many initiatives that originated on the platform of the Christmas Parliamentary Meetings directly respond to this task and have already been embodied in concrete decisions. Among them are the establishment of a unified federal status for

large families, the extension of maternity capital programs until 2030, and the ban on propaganda promoting the refusal to have children.”

V.I. Matvienko stressed that a powerful moral example is set by the heroes of Russia - participants in the special military operation - who represent a wide variety of nationalities and confessions and who day after day courageously and selflessly defend the Fatherland. The head of the upper chamber of the Russian parliament considers it important that from the very first day of the special military operation, Orthodox priests and ministers of other traditional confessions have been alongside the fighters on the front line, fulfilling a sacred duty, supporting faith and hope in the hearts of soldiers and officers, and sharing all the hardships of frontline life on an equal footing with the servicemen.

“Of course, veterans of the special military operation can give a great deal to the younger generation. We place great hopes on this important mentoring work. We know that meetings with heroes are also held in theological seminaries. And, undoubtedly, this area will certainly continue to develop,” V.I. Matvienko added.

The Chairwoman of the Federation Council also congratulated His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the forthcoming anniversary of his enthronement.

After that, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church delivered the main address.

“The good tradition that has developed over the past years, which includes communication between members of the upper chamber of our parliament and the Primate of the Church, with representatives of the episcopate within the framework of the International Educational Readings, has shown that joint discussion of issues relevant to our Fatherland contributes to the development of Church–state relations,” His Holiness noted.

“A special responsibility for the destiny of the people, this is the common denominator of the efforts undertaken by the Church and representatives of the legislative authority of our country so that Russia’s development may proceed progressively and successfully. So that not only its state, but also its spiritual sovereignty may be strengthened; so that the people may grow morally, revealing their intellectual, cultural, and creative potential for the good of the Fatherland and for the salvation of their own souls,” the Primate emphasized. “By salvation, we believers, of course, understand the Kingdom of Heaven; but the Kingdom of Heaven begins here, on earth. And if a person has hell in his soul, if his consciousness is darkened, if he is unable to distinguish good from evil, then this hell will continue into eternity. There are no secrets, everything is open: if you want to be happy here on earth, live according to the law that God has placed in your nature, and you will be happy. And this happiness will extend not only to the 60, 70, or 80 years of your life, but into eternity.”

According to His Holiness, the Church shares a special responsibility for the fate of the people “with those representatives of authority with whom there is a certain consonance in defending traditional values.”

“In recent times, the legislative authorities have made significant efforts to ensure that the development of our country proceeds successfully and progressively, and in this process not only the authorities are involved, but also civil society, as we now say, and indeed all true patriots of Russia. And, I repeat, we are speaking not only about defending Russia’s state sovereignty, without which independent development of the Fatherland is impossible, but also about the need to defend spiritual sovereignty. The achievement of this strategic goal is largely determined by how carefully we treat our national spiritual and cultural heritage, the core of which is the Christian faith and the Orthodox tradition,” His Holiness Patriarch added.

The following also spoke at the meeting: Deputy Chairman of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation P.O. Tolstoy; Assistant to the President of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Russian Military Historical Society V.R. Medinsky; a migrant from the Republic of Poland, ambassador and head of projects for the preservation of historical memory in the Republic of Poland of the Russian Society “Znanie,” E.L. Tkachev; and rector of the Episcopal Metochion in honor of the Iveron Icon of the Mother of God in the city of Pervouralsk, military priest Archpriest Vasily Zudilov (Yekaterinburg Diocese).

V.I. Matvienko addressed those gathered with concluding remarks, in which she thanked all the organizers and participants of the Parliamentary Meetings.

After that, the Primate of the Russian Church and the Chairwoman of the Federation Council presented certificates and gifts to the winners of the competitions “The Beauty of God’s World” and “For the Moral Feat of the Teacher.”

The awards were presented to:

in the category “Main Theme,” first place in the first age group (9–12 years) - Ulyana Milokhina (9 years old), the work “Angel of Peace” (the village of Bolshie Klyuchishchi, Ulyanovsk Region);

in the category “Main Theme,” first place in the second age group (13–17 years) - Angelina Goncherenok (14 years old), the work “Well, Shall We Go Home?” (the urban-type settlement of Antopol, Brest Region, Republic of Belarus);

in the category “Orthodox Icon,” first place - Angelina Pak (17 years old), the work “Archangel Gabriel” (the city of Vyborg, Leningrad Region);

in the category “Porcelain Painting,” first place - Anastasia Roshchupkina (17 years old), the work “Golden-Domed Moscow” (Simferopol and Crimean Diocese).

The Grand Prix diploma was awarded to the winner of the 20th annual All-Russian competition in the field of pedagogy, upbringing, and work with children and youth under the age of 20, “For the Moral Feat of the Teacher,” to Ekaterina Sergeevna Bender, a primary school teacher at State Budgetary Educational Institution “Lyceum No. 597” of the Primorsky District of St. Petersburg, for the work “Supplementary General Education Development Program ‘The Gift of the Divine Word.’”

The session of the Parliamentary Meetings was broadcast live on the Federation Council’s television channels, Rossiya 24, Spas, and Soyuz, as well as on the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarchia.ru.

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