



## **DECR Chairman takes part in an Interfaith Conference in Jerusalem**



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On the evening of February 17, 2026, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, arrived in Israel on a working visit.

At Ben-Gurion International Airport (Tel Aviv), the hierarch was met by Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. Accompanying the Chairman of the DECR on the trip is his assistant, Priest Alexander Ershov.

On the morning of February 18, Metropolitan Anthony visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in

Jerusalem and venerated its Holy Shrines.

Later that day, the hierarch took part in the interreligious conference “Religions Align... and Their Ultimate Goal is Human.” The forum was honored by the presence of His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine, who addressed the participants with welcoming remarks.

Among those attending the conference were A.D. Viktorov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the State of Israel; S.V. Cheremin, Head of the Moscow City Department for External Economic and International Relations; Archimandrite Vassian (Zmeyev), Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem; Archimandrite Roman (Krasovsky), Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia; Abbess Ekaterina (Chernysheva), Superior of the Gorny Convent in Jerusalem; as well as representatives of Christian denominations and other religions.

The objective set by the forum’s organizers was to exchange experiences of good-neighborly relations among traditional religions and to deepen communication and mutual understanding between the peoples and communities of Russia and Israel.

“This good initiative is intended to serve a lofty goal - the strengthening of peace, trust, and concord. It is of particular importance that religious leaders have gathered in the Holy Land,” the Chairman of the DECR noted in his address.

For many centuries, representatives of different peoples and traditional religions in Russia - whose more than thousand-year history is inseparably linked with the Russian Orthodox Church - have lived predominantly in peace with one another, Metropolitan Anthony testified. Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists live in peace and harmony, jointly upholding traditional values, helping those in need, and assisting one another in addressing various issues.

The foundation of the Russian Orthodox Church’s approach to relations with people of other faiths or ethnic backgrounds lies in the examples given by Christ and the instructions of the Apostles.

“Proceeding from this, we always strive to build an open and honest peacemaking dialogue with all who desire it. I can testify that the Moscow Patriarchate has found many like-minded partners among traditional religious communities. We are confident that by uniting our efforts in the service of peace and goodness, and in affirming the commandments and values given by God, we will be able to offer a convincing witness to the world in the face of existing challenges and problems,” the DECR Chairman emphasized.

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