



## The Holy Synod considered a number of issues concerning external Church relations



### **DECR Communication Service, 12.03.2026.**

On March 12, at the Patriarchal and Synodal residence in the Danilov Monastery in Moscow, under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', the first meeting in 2026 of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church took place. The Holy Synod considered a number of issues concerning external church relations.

The Holy Synod adopted a decision to confirm the administrator of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Western Europe (Journal No. 8).

*On November 8, 2025, by decree of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', the Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe, Metropolitan Nestor of Korsun and Western Europe, was suspended from the administration of the Patriarchal Exarchate of Western Europe, as well as from the*

*Korsun, Spanish-Portuguese dioceses and the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate in Italy in connection with ecclesiastical judicial proceedings initiated against him. Metropolitan Mark of Ryazan and Mikhailov was appointed temporary administrator of the Exarchate.*

*A letter was received in the name of His Holiness the Patriarch from His Eminence Metropolitan Nestor, containing an admission of having committed actions that caused scandal among the faithful and contradicted the Holy Canons, as well as repentance and a promise of correction. "I understand that I have caused scandal in the Church <...> I see how many people I have let down and caused to suffer. Therefore, I will accept with firm readiness any decision of Yours – up to the most severe," the aforementioned letter states.*

The Holy Synod resolved:

– To release His Eminence Metropolitan Nestor of Korsun and Western Europe from the administration of the Korsun Diocese, from the position of Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe, from the temporary administration of the Spanish-Portuguese Diocese and the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate in Italy;

– His Eminence Metropolitan Mark of Ryazan and Mikhailov to be Metropolitan of Korsun and Patriarchal Exarch of Western Europe, with retention of his temporary administration of the Budapest-Hungarian Diocese and his release from the administration of the Ryazan Diocese, and with an expression of gratitude for his many years of service in the administration of the Ryazan Metropolis and the Ryazan Diocese;

– His Eminence Metropolitan Nestor to be Hierarch of Stupino, vicar of the Korsun Diocese;

– The temporary administration of the Spanish-Portuguese Diocese and the parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate in Italy to be entrusted to His Eminence Metropolitan Mark of Korsun.

At the meeting of the Holy Synod, a report prepared by the Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, was heard concerning the canonization of the saints of God carried out in the Serbian Orthodox Church on May 13–17, 2025 (Journal No. 11).

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church resolved to include in the calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church the name of Saint Nikodim (Milash), Bishop of Dalmatia and Istria, establishing his feast day on September 21 / October 4 (as established in the Serbian Orthodox Church), and also to include in the calendar Saint Righteous Anna, mother of Saint Basil of Ostrog, establishing the celebration of her memory on April 30 / May 13 (as established in the Serbian Orthodox Church).

A report by the Chairman of the DECR, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, on his visit to Israel was heard (Journal No. 12), which took place with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' from February 17 to 19, 2026. On February 18, in Jerusalem, Metropolitan Anthony took part in an interreligious conference attended by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine. A meeting took place between Metropolitan Anthony and the Primate of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church also considered the activity of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, resolving to relieve Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) of the position of Deputy Chairman of the DECR (Journal No. 19).

In addition, at the meeting of the Holy Synod, a decision was made to establish a Russian Orthodox parish in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (Journal No. 22). The members of the Synod heard a report prepared by the Chairman of the DECR, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk. According to the information presented by the head of the DECR, Russian-speaking faithful living in Abu Dhabi appealed to the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church with a request to establish a Russian Orthodox parish there.

In a letter addressed to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' dated January 17, 2026, His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East gave his consent to the establishment in Abu Dhabi of a Russian Orthodox parish under the jurisdiction of the Antiochian Patriarchate and to the construction of a church. Taking into account the consent of the Patriarch of Antioch, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church resolved to establish in Abu Dhabi a Russian Orthodox parish in honor of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God. The pastoral care of the newly established parish was entrusted by decision of the Synod to Archimandrite Alexander (Zarkeshev), rector of the Church of the Holy Apostle Philip in Sharjah.

At the meeting of the Holy Synod, a report prepared by the Chairman of the DECR, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, on dioceses and parishes abroad was heard (Journal No. 23). The Holy Synod resolved to send Archpriest Oleg Mokryak, a supernumerary cleric of the Odessa Diocese, and Priest Nikolai Gedesh, a cleric of the Tikhvin Diocese, at the disposal of the administrator of the Argentine and South American Diocese.

A report by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk on a petition received regarding the transfer of a clergyman to the clergy of the Polish Orthodox Church was also heard (Journal No. 24). The Synod resolved to bless the transfer of Priest Alexander Kolatsky, a supernumerary cleric of the Grodno Diocese, to the clergy of the Polish Orthodox Church and to send a letter of release for the said clergyman to His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland.

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