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Metropolitan Nektarios of Corfu on the bringing of the Relics of St. Spyridon to Russia: “The Saint’s blessing is above all that is temporal and transient”

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Metropolitan Nektarios of Corfu, Paxos and the Diapontian Islands has shared his thoughts and impressions following his visit to Russia at the head of a delegation that brought the right hand of St. Spyridon of Tremithus, the Wonderworker, to Russia for the veneration of the faithful.

In an article published by the **Romfea news agency**, he said that the journey and the veneration of the sacred relic had been undertaken at the invitation of the Russian Orthodox Church, with the blessing and approval of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, and that the relevant documents had been

signed by its First Hierarch, His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos of Athens and All Greece. The hierarch noted that this visit was a continuation of similar journeys undertaken in the past to the United States of America (in 2017), Cyprus, Russia, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, Poland, Belarus, Georgia and other countries, as well as to the Metropolises of the Church of Greece. “All these journeys were undertaken at the invitation of the respective ecclesiastical authorities, with the consent, blessing and written permission of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece,” he stated.

“Both during the present sacred pilgrimage to the Russian Church and in all other instances, the sole purpose of bringing the right hand of St. Spyridon is to enable Orthodox Christians throughout the world who are unable to travel to Corfu to receive the saint’s blessing, to be strengthened in their faith and to receive strength for their spiritual struggle in an age of secularization, desacralization, changing values and a general confusion of concepts: phenomena that we are experiencing in our own homeland as well,” Metropolitan Nektarios emphasized.

Sharing his impressions of the journey, he said: “The scenes we witnessed everywhere we went, including during our visit to Russia, were and remain extraordinarily moving and inspiring of hope. St. Spyridon is a universal saint of simplicity, humility, and love for God and man. He is a saint who reminds us of the significance of the Divine Liturgy and prayer, as well as of the unchanging nature of the faith, since he defended our holy dogmas at the First Ecumenical Council, the 1,600th anniversary of which was commemorated only last year. We live by the blessing of the saint and continually anticipate the experience of the Resurrection, which is borne by his incorrupt body, resting in the cathedral city of our Holy Metropolis, on Corfu. Seeing with my own eyes the love, piety, veneration and faith of the people during the pilgrimages that have taken place to date with the right hand of our saint, I thought once again that, ultimately, this was indeed the will of God: that people throughout the world, through the veneration even of this small portion of the holy relics, might receive the grace of God through the prayers of the saint... What we experienced in Russia these days truly exceeded all expectations. Thousands of people, displaying incredible patience by any human measure, patiently observing order and waiting in line, spent hours everywhere we went waiting for the opportunity to venerate the holy relics and receive the saint’s blessing.”

“We exclaimed and continue to exclaim: ‘The Lord God is alive!’ We rejoiced! We were deeply moved!” the hierarch continued. “We do not believe that these people should have been deprived of the saint’s blessing for reasons unrelated to religious faith but of a geopolitical nature. We hope and pray that these reasons will one day disappear. The saint’s blessing, however, is above all that is temporal and transient.”

Metropolitan Nektarios of Corfu, Paxosand the Diapontian Islands also spoke about his participation in the Divine Liturgy celebrated by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’, recalling that the

Church of Greece, to which he belongs, has never severed communion with the Russian Orthodox Church (which is why the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece granted permission for this pilgrimage to take place).

“We are not empowered to resolve the existing disagreements, nor do we consider them sufficient grounds for depriving the people of the opportunity to venerate St. Spyridon,” he stated. “We pray ‘for the union of all’ and ‘for the peace of the whole world,’ and during these days we felt that there is both hope and an opportunity, relying on the love and intercession of our saints, to overcome together the existing disagreements and differences in approach,” the hierarch said. “At times, these differences are expressed even in actions that no one would wish to see, but such things have occurred throughout the centuries-long history of the Church. The presence of the saint is a sign for us that, regardless of the disagreements that exist, we are all Orthodox and ‘rightly divide the word of Truth,’ which is our common faith in the Triune God and our life in the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church — the Orthodox Church.”

“We thank the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Greece, our higher ecclesiastical authority, for granting us canonical permission and blessing to share the great gift that God has allowed us to possess on Corfu, our holy father Spyridon, with such a pious people as the Russian people, with whom we are bound by centuries-old ties. Their origins go back to the time when the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Byzantine Empire brought the Christian faith to Kiev in AD 988,” emphasized Metropolitan Nektarios of Corfu, Paxos and the Diapontian Islands. He stated: “These ties between our peoples, founded on the Orthodox faith and our common Orthodox identity, cannot be erased for geopolitical reasons that will not exist forever. The Church was, is and will remain the foundation of our common journey and unity.”

Photos: Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus’

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