



Primates of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church in America celebrate at St. Catherine the Great Martyr Church

The 15th anniversary of the Moscow Representation of the Orthodox Church in America was marked on 7 December 2009, the commemoration day of St. Catherine the Great Martyr. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Beatitude Archbishop Jonah of Washington and Metropolitan of All America and Canada celebrated the Divine Liturgy and prayer service at the Church of St. Catherine-in-the-Fields.

Concelebrating with the Primates were Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Nifon of Philippiopolis, representative of the Patriarch of the Antioch at the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Bishop Antonije of Moravic, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia at the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Bishop Ignatij of Provadiya, representative of the Patriarch of Bulgaria at the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; archpriest Dimitry Smirnov, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for Relations with the Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies; archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for Church-Society Relations; archpriest Alexey Yuschenko, rector of the Moscow Representation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia; archimandrite Zacchaeus (Wood), representative of the Orthodox Church in America at the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; archpriest Alexander Abramov, acting representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in the USA; Rev. Igor Yakimchuk, acting DECR secretary for interorthodox relations; clerics from Russia and other countries, and clerics of the Church of St. Catherine.

Attending the service celebrated in the Church Slavonic and English languages were foreign diplomats, public figures, benefactors of the parish, and many parishioners. Special prayers were offered up for over one hundred victims of the fire in Perm on December 5.

Archimandrite Zacchaeus greeted the guests after the service and presented His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah with liturgical vestments in prayerful memory of the Representation's jubilee.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church congratulated the congregation on the commemoration day of the Holy and Great Martyr Catherine who gives a radiant example of combining secular knowledge, education, beauty, and high position in society with profound faith.

His Holiness noted that in no one is prohibited to believe in God in contemporary society. However, something dangerous is happening, as secular culture is becoming non-Christian and non-religious culture, while values and ideals of success are not nourished by spiritual sources of Divine revelation. [...] Put country grieves the victims of the fire in Perm and we pray to God to receive their souls and forgive their sins." He also invited the congregation to pray for the spiritual and moral growth of the Russian people and thanked Rev. Zacchaeus for his work of the OCA representative at the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

His Holiness greeted His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah, saying, " You have been called to the primatial service at the difficult time for the American Church, but we know that you were elected with the unanimous support of the bishops, clergymen, and laymen who place their hope for the prosperity of the Church on you. On behalf of the Mother Church I wish you God's help in your primatial ministry."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented the Church of St. Catherine with the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God to commemorate the event.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah congratulated all those present with the feast day and thanked Patriarch Kirill for many testimonies of friendship and support given to the OCA and its Moscow representation, underscoring its role in the strengthening of relations with the Moscow Patriarchate and other Local Orthodox Churches.

The Primate of the Orthodox Church in America highly appreciated the work of archimandrite Zacchaeus and presented him with a certificate signed by all bishops of the OCA.

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