



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

DECR chairman presided over the round-table conference on cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and compatriots residing in Latin American countries



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On February 7-8, a round-table conference took place on 'The Russian Orthodox Church and compatriots: the experience of cooperation in Latin American countries'. With a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, it was presided over by the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk. The Moscow church delegation also included Archpriest Nikolay Lishchenyuk, DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the affairs of the diaspora, and Rev. Alexander Yershov, assistant to the DECR chairman.

The forum was organized jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation with the

support of the Foundation 'Russkiy Mir' (Russian World). Similar conferences have been held since 2009, bringing together clergy and representatives of compatriots' organizations in various regions of the world. Earlier, such meetings took place in Brussels, Buenos-Aires, Beijing, San Francisco, Johannesburg, Rome, Berlin, Rabat, Seoul, and Budapest.

The roundtable in Buenos Aires brought together clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church, representatives of the Russian diaspora in Argentina, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Peru and Chile.

Before the beginning of the meeting, Metropolitan Anthony and Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America held a service for the beginning every good deed.

Opening the work of the roundtable, Metropolitan Anthony spoke on various aspects of interaction between the Russian Orthodox Church and diaspora organizations. At the instruction of the Holy Synod, the Department for External Church Relations coordinates the activity of parishes abroad and the interaction with compatriots residing in the far abroad. The theme of compatriots lies in the area of special attention of the Working Group for Cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Federation Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Working Group marks this year the 20th anniversary of its work.

The DECR chairman reported that the current meeting is the first after the forced three-year interruption caused by the pandemics of the new coronavirus infection, which entailed in its turn some objective limitations in movement between countries. 'It is gratifying that we resume our tradition precisely from the Latin American region in which many natives of historical Russia reside. It is not accidental that Argentina has been chosen for holding a round-table conference: there is the largest diaspora in the region, which has been created by several waves of emigration. In Buenos-Aires, there is the center of the dioceses of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in South America. In addition, close relations have been developed between Russia and Argentina as their diplomatic relations number over 130 years.

The hierarch stressed that 2022 went down in the history of Russian diaspora throughout the world as the most dramatic period and a test for solidarity of compatriots: 'The ability to stand up together for the values of our people, regardless of how far we may be from the Motherland, is an indicator of the maturity of the community abroad. Precisely at such moments, a diaspora is formed binding its members not by the soil or local mode of life but by the culture, language and faith of the ancestors'.

Metropolitan Anthony said, 'Today, as never before, it is necessary to preserve 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph. 4:3) at every individual parish and in each family. And this spiritual unity is above personal political sympathies and antipathies. Our task is one in two - to preserve spiritual ties and communion of the faithful of various ethnic backgrounds within one parish community and to use the uniting potential of the Church for fostering the communities of compatriots abroad despite all the unfriendly external factors. I believe the image of unity of the faithful around the Eucharist Cup, from which we all partake, should become the image of solidarity in our everyday life as well'.

The DECR chairman expressed the conviction that 'the space of our traditions and culture should not be artificially limited to exclusively ethnic principle'.

'Nikolay Gogol, Taras Shevchenko and Gregory Skovoroda are the same heritage of our common civilisation as Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov and Mikhail Lomonosov. St. John of Shanghai, a native of the Kharkov Province, who graduated from the Kharkov University Law School, has verily become the earthy and later also heavenly angel-patron of all our compatriots, sharing with them the hardships of the life in a foreign country and taking pastoral care of them in Belgrade and Shanghai, on the Philippine Tubabao Island and in Brussels. He finished his life journey as Archbishop of San-Francisco in Seattle to be later glorified as a saint both in the Church abroad and in the Church in the Motherland. There is a great number of such or similar destinies. They teach us to be selfless and faithful to the duty, mutual aid and constructive labour', Metropolitan Anthony stressed.

Among the speakers at the plenary session were Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Argentina D. V. Feoktistov, deputy director of the Department for Work with Compatriots Abroad of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs V. Yu. Mitrofanov, Bishop Leonid of Argentina and South America, deputy director of the Department for Relations with the Constituencies of the Russian Federation, Parliament and Public Associations Ms. K. P. Kozhanova. Reports were made by the head of the Rossotrudnichestvo Representation in Argentina, Mr. O. A. Muratova, on 'The Russian House in Buenos-Aires and the Russian Orthodox Church: the experience of cooperation in preserving and popularizing the Russian culture in Argentina', secretary of the Diocese of Argentina and South America Archpriest Sergiy Yurin on 'The work with compatriots at parishes of the diocese of Argentina and South America and, in particular, in Buenos-Aires', chairman of the Coordinating Committee of the Council of Russian Compatriots Organizations in Argentina (CCCRC) S. V. Yarmolyuk on 'The Russian diaspora in Argentina. The CCCRC role and work in today's geopolitical spectrum', and other participants in the meeting.

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During the two days of work, a fruitful exchange took place concerning the ways of improving the coordination of the efforts of the Church, state and compatriots' organizations to foster and develop the Russian diaspora.

Concluding the event, Metropolitan Anthony thanked the attendees for their fruitful work and wished them God's help in pastoral work, spiritual education and concern for those who are near.

The DECR chairman presented the chancellor of the Diocese of Argentina and South America with altar crosses conveyed to the parishes in Argentina with the support of the Department for External Economic and International Relations of the Moscow Government.

After the round-table conference, Metropolitan Anthony approached the press.

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