

ACCOUNT OF THE VISIT OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM TO RUSSIA FOR THE 70TH BIRTHDAY OF THE PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW

A. The meeting of H.B. the Patriarch of Jerusalem with H.H. the Patriarch of Moscow

Before moon on Saturday, the 6th/19th of November 2016, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow and His Entourage met with His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow who was accompanied by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Metropolitan Sergei, Protopresbyter Nikolai Balasov and other clerics. Patriarch Kyrill expressed joy over the meeting, the first after the 2013 Joint Liturgy on the anniversary of the Russian's baptismal. "Such meetings" He said, "solidify our unity, in spite of occasional differences. We welcome you with great joy as the Patriarch of the Holy City and the Holy Land, sanctified by the footsteps of Christ our Saviour. We welcome you from the land from where the Apostles left to proclaim the teachings of Christ across the earth".

His Beatitude Theophilos replied that the meeting is indeed a special joy and honour bestowed by the Patriarchate of Moscow on the occasion of Patriarch Kyrill's birthday. "This is particularly important", His Beatitude added, "not only for strengthening the ties between the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the Church of Russia, but also for expressing the unity of the Church as a whole".

The Russian people and the Russian Church have greatly benefitted the Holy Shrines, e.g. the Russian Church's

contribution, of 3.000.000 USD, to the restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. "The renovation", said Patriarch Theophilos, "was effected through the Palestinian Autonomy, because of disagreement between the three Communities" and He added: "We, on our behalf, will restore the Cavern with the Franciscans, aspiring to Your interest in the subvention of the project".

We thank our Triadic God for this project and for the fact that pilgrims from Russia and Ukraine keep supporting the Holy Lands, said Patriarch Theophilos. "These pilgrims reinforce the Christian regime and the Christian character of Jerusalem", He said.

Patriarch Theophilos went on to invite Patriarch Kyrill to visit the Holy Land on the completion of works on the Basilica of the Nativity and of the restoration project of the Aedicula of the Holy Sepulchre. He expressed joy over the recent visit of Prime Minister Medvedev and his interest in the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre.

On this subject, Patriarch Kyrill said He was recently informed by PM Medvedev that Russia will sponsor the renovation of the street that leads to the Basilica and of the forecourt of the Church.

Patriarch Kyrill also referred to a war of misinformation against the Church of Russia, that blames it for the absence of a total of four Churches from the Great Synod of Orthodoxy. Our absence, He said, was also due to strong critique against the text on the relation of the Orthodox Church with Christian Communities. "However", Patriarch Kyrill said, "we are not negative against the Synod. Its approval by the consciousness of the Church will be proven in the future", and He added: "We are looking forward to a future Pan-Orthodox Synod".

Patriarch Kyrill also spoke of the crisis in Ukraine, a country "ruled by dictatorship that aims at destroying the

Orthodox Church", in His words.

In His response, Patriarch Theophilos said that the absence of the four Churches from the Great Synod had not damaged the unity of Orthodoxy, as the conference paved the way for a Pan-Orthodox Synod. With regards to the crisis in Ukraine, Patriarch Theophilos said that He recently met with the Ukrainian President at the Patriarchate where He stressed the need to restore church unity in the country before anything else.

On the occasion of the meeting, the two Patriarchs exchanged gifts.

On the evening of the same day, Patriarch Kyrill hosted all the Heads of the Orthodox Churches and their attendants to dinner.

There, Patriarch Theophilos delivered an address in English, see: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2016/11/19/27882>

B. Joint Patriarchal Liturgy on the 70th birthday of His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow

On the morning of Sunday, the 7th/20th of November 2016, a Joint Primatial Liturgy was held on the occasion of the 70th birthday of Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow.

All Churches participated in the Joint Liturgy, namely: the Ecumenical Patriarchate, represented by Metropolitan Emmanuel of France; the Patriarchate of Alexandria, with Patriarch Theodoros; the Patriarchate of Antioch, with Metropolitan Nephon; the Patriarchate of Serbia, with Patriarch Irinej; the Patriarchate of Bulgaria in Western Europe, the Patriarchate of Georgia, represented by Patriarch Elias of Georgia; the Church of Cyprus with Archbishop Chrysostomos; the Church of Poland, the Church of Romania, the Church of Greece, the Church of Albania, and the Church of the Czech Republic.

The Joint Liturgy was headed by Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria and it expressed the Orthodox faith of all Orthodox Churches, in accordance with the Nicene Creed.

On the apolysis, Metropolitan Onouphrios of Ukraine read the message of Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow. Addresses then followed by other Churches, i.e. Metropolitan Emmanuel of France and representatives of the state of Russia.

During the lunch that followed, His Beatitude Theophilos addressed Patriarch Kyrill in English, see link: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/2016/11/20/27885>

On Sunday evening, His Beatitude left the Radisson hotel for Moscow airport, accompanied by Metropolitan Barsanuphius of Petersburg, Archbishop Tikhon of Austria-Hungary and Archimandrite Theophanes.

At the airport, the Patriarch and His attendants boarded a plane of Aeroflot airlines to land safely at Ben Gurion Airport around midnight.

From the Secretariat-General

