



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with Japanese Prime-Minister Yoshihiko Noda

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On 18 September 2012, while on a visit to Japan, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with Yoshihiko Noda, head of the Japanese government, at the Prime-Minister's residence.

Taking part in the meeting were also Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, Yevgeny Afanasiev, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to Japan, and Koichiro Gemba, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Prime-Minister of Japan said he was aware of how greatly the Russian Orthodox Church and personally His Holiness Patriarch Kirill have been contributing to the development of Russian society which has always enjoyed the Church's spiritual support.

The Prime-Minister expressed his gratitude to the Primate of the Russian Church for visiting the areas in northeast Japan, affected by natural disaster.

Yoshihiko Noda also expressed his cordial wish for Japanese-Russian relations to improve and said he believed that the visit of Patriarch Kirill to Japan would make a great positive contribution to this process.

The head of the Japanese government shared his impressions about the meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin at APEC CEO Summit in Vladivostok and expressed his hope for the development of cultural ties between the two nations.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill thanked the Prime-Minister for his kind words and hospitality and shared his impressions about the visit to Japan, noting warm hospitality and good atmosphere of the meetings with the Japanese faithful.

Patriarch Kirill noted that his visit was timed to the centenary of the blessed demise of St Nicholas of Japan, Equal-to-the-Apostles, and emphasized particularly that in spite of being a Church of minority, the Japanese Orthodox Church as a national Japanese Church contributed greatly to strengthening spiritual relations between the Russian and Japanese people. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted that those relations had been maintained even during hard times. The Primate of the Russian Orthodox

Church mentioned a heroic deed of St Nicholas who had stayed with his beloved flock during the Russian-Japanese war.

The participants in the meeting also discussed the significance of spiritual factor in international relations. Only cordial relations, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill emphasized, can help common people understand relations between nations. He told that one of the examples of cordial sympathy was the reaction of Russian people to the natural disaster that had carried away thousands of people in Japan in March 2011.

Patriarch Kirill expressed his firm belief that Russia and Japan should improve their relations. He noted that the Joint Message of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Catholic Polish Bishop's Conference, signed in August in Poland, was an example of how a spiritual factor could influence relations between nations.

Patriarch Kirill expressed his support to all endeavours, including to those of Yoshihiko Noda's government, aimed at strengthening cooperation with Russia.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church presented the Prime-Minister of Japan with the Japanese edition of his book "Freedom and Responsibility" and expressed his hope that the viewpoint stated in the book might arouse interest among Japanese people who also try to combine respect for human freedom with the preservation of traditional values of Japanese society.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill also presented Yoshihiko Noda with the Japanese version of Anatoly Khlopetsky's book "And an Eternal Fight..." about the spiritual life of Russian judo and sambo fighter Vasily Oschepkov, noting that Prime-Minister Yoshihiko Noda himself is a sportsman and a judo fighter.

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