



## **Patriarch Kirill begins his visit to Poland**

On August 16, 2012, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in Poland at the invitation of the Primate of the Polish Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Metropolitan Sava.

The official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church who accompany His Holiness includes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Hegumen Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; V. Legoida, head of the synodal information department; Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman; and M. Kuksov, acting head of the patriarchal personal secretariat.

At Okecie Airport in Warsaw the Russian Orthodox Church's delegation was welcomed by His Beatitude Metropolitan Sava of Warsaw and All Poland and bishops of the Polish Orthodox Church. The welcoming party also included representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland: Bishop Wojciech Polak and Ks. Jaroslaw Mrowczynski, and governmental officials: Mr. Michal Boni, Minister of Administration and Digitisation, and Mr. Jozef Rozanski, director of the department for denominations, we well as Mr. A. Alekseyev, Russian Ambassador to Warsaw.

Meeting the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church were also the Polish Army guards of honour and military orchestra. Coming up to the military company of honour, Patriarch Kirill greeted them in Polish.

In his brief address to the mass media reporters who assembled at the airport, Patriarch Kirill said:

'I would like to express a feeling of deep gratitude and joy over this opportunity to set foot on the Polish soil and pay a visit to the Polish Orthodox Church as well as to meet with the Catholic Church in Poland in the persons of her hierarchs and clergy.

It is my first visit to a country with Western European culture after my election as Patriarch of Moscow and All Russian and the first ever visit of a Patriarch of Moscow to Poland. It gives us an opportunity to meet with both the Orthodox Christians and Catholics in Poland and to reflect on our life, on the past, present and future. The Gospel is a common foundation for all of us. It is my deep conviction that it is possible to settle on its basis any misunderstandings that arise in the human community.

Remarkably, Christian culture is predominant both in Poland and Russia, and it means that we have a common foundation, a common basis also to solving the problem we have inherited from the past.

I would like to invoke God's blessing upon the Polish people, the country, the state, to wish you all success in your work and in your life and to express hope that my visit will make its own modest contribution, among other things, to the development of relations between Poland and the states in which the Russian Orthodox Church is present. In your persons as representatives of the mass media, I would like, here at the airport, to greet all the Polish people'.

From the airport the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church proceeded to the Cathedral of St. Mary Magdalene in Warsaw.

*DECR Communication Service*

*Photos by the Patriarchal Press Service*

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