



## Archbishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania meets with Metropolitan Elias of Beirut



On June 9, 2021, Metropolitan Elias of Beirut met at the Metropolis of Beirut with Archbishop Leonid of Vladikavkas and Alania, deputy head of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate.

His Eminence Leonid, who is on a trip to Lebanon with a working visit with a blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, cordially greeted Metropolitan Elias on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church and underlined that the terrible tragedy, which happened on August 4 at the sea port of Beirut echoed with pain in the hearts of Russian Orthodox people. Therefore, it is not accidental that it is the Russian Orthodox Church that has given a considerable help in restoring ruined churches, schools and diocesan structures of the Metropolis of Beirut.

‘We also plan to give all possible assistance in the future to our brothers from the Orthodox Church of Antioch in restoring their ruined shrines’, he concluded.

‘I highly appreciate your presence in Beirut’ Metropolitan Elias responded.

The hierarch of the Orthodox Church of Antioch stressed, ‘I regard Russians as my brothers because I studied at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in New York and grew spiritually at the time when outstanding

theologians, John Meyendorff and Alexander Schmemmann, taught there. The guidance of these light-bearing and blessed men was for me a true manifestation of Divine providence; it was the greatest happiness. I loved theology and enjoyed conversations with them hanging on their every word. I admired Father John's humbleness; he loved me very much. Once I came to his study and he asked me to tell him about myself and about Lebanon. I laid open to him all my inner turmoils and was struck by what happened: Father Alexander Meyendorff began crying together with me. And Father Alexander Schmemmann, too, was such an affectionate pastor. Heavenly Kingdom be to him!'

He also shared remembrances of his participation in a theological circle guided by these pastors, his meeting Archpriest Georges Florovsky, from whom, as His Eminence Elias admitted, 'he became aware of many things about spiritual life'. 'They all were an example of how one should live according to God's truth, how to respect human dignity', Metropolitan Elias stated.

In memory of the conversation, Archbishop Leonid presented His Eminence Elias with a pectoral icon.

Participating in the meeting were also Mr. A. Rudakov, Russia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Lebanon, Archimandrite Philip, rector of the Beirut Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Mr. D. Zelenin, warden of the Representation.

On the same day, Archbishop Leonid together with Metropolitan Elias and Mr. G. Hasbani, chairman of the St. Porphyrius Committee and former deputy prime minister of the Lebanese Government, inspected the facilities of the Metropolis of Beirut under restoration sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church.

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with reference to the website of the Beirut Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church