



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill meets with President of Cuba



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On November 22, 2022, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia met with President of Cuba Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel y Bermúdez in the Patriarchal residence at the St. Daniel Monastery.

Attending the meeting from the Russian Orthodox Church were Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate; Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, acting vice-chairman of the DECR; and Rev. Andrey Titushkin, DECR secretariat for the diaspora.

The delegation accompanying the President of Cuba included Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Cuba to Russia Julio Antonio Garmendía Peña, General Director for Bilateral Affairs of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Emilio Lozada Garcia; and Ms. Lis Cuesta Peraza, first lady of Cuba.

Addressing himself to the high guest with a cordial greeting, His Holiness said, 'I am pleased with the meaningful and emotionally very positive contact that has been established with the leaders of your country since as far back as our first meeting with the late Comandante Fidel Castro to today. One may say that a good tradition of relationships has been established between the Russian Church and the Island of Freedom'.

He shared his impressions of his meetings with Fidel Castro Ruz, which took place in various years, noting, 'I would like to remember once again this outstanding man who, for the sake of the freedom of his country, had the courage and power to challenge the most powerful capitalist state. This striking example in history shows that it is not always physical, military and political power that wins a victory. We, Christians, are taught that power is in truth. By continuing her independent, sovereign existence in spite of the heaviest of pressures from outside, Cuba asserts this principle'.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church stated with satisfaction that after a certain interval in the 90s caused by a difficult situation in Russia, the dialogue between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Cuba, between the leaders of the two countries, was resumed.

He added that Russia today, just as Cuba for many decades now, has to build her life under the pressure of sanctions aimed to weaken the country from within. 'Those who are forming such plans and strategy against Russia have a poor knowledge of our history', His Holiness stressed reminding of examples when in various periods of history, including during the Second World War, our country struggled for her sovereignty with very powerful external forces and conquered. 'I am saying this to you as the leader of a state whose people experienced in full measure an attempt to isolate, blockade and economically stifle them. Cuba existed and will exist giving a remarkable example showing that truth is stronger than power', Patriarch Kirill added.

His Holiness called the Russian-speaking diaspora residing in Cuba a very important factor for developing good relations between the two countries. 'Today this diaspora is organized in the spiritual, religious sense as well' he continued, 'Our church of Our Lady of Kazan, which I had the luck to consecrate (in 2008- ed.), is very active as the Russian Orthodox diaspora works around it organizing a cultural program, such as running films, exhibitions and all that enriches its life and also offers Cubans an opportunity to come to a better knowledge of the religious life of the Russian people'.

On his part, Mr. Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel y Bermúdez noted that meetings between representatives of the leadership of the Republic of Cuba with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian have become a good tradition. The high guest congratulated His Holiness on his birthday marked on

November 20.

The Cuba's President also conveyed a warm fraternal greeting and best wishes from Gen. Raul Castro Ruz, with whom His Holiness met on repeated occasions.

'Your words showed love and sympathy for Fidel Castro as you mentioned the importance of his personality, Mr. Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel y Bermúdez continued, 'For us, Fidel is a personality and the way of thinking we address every day, especially at difficult times we experience'.

The head of state gave a high value to the political dialogue between Russia and Cuba, underlining that his dialogue 'becomes an important support and example of how we should build our relations in other aspects as well', Mr. Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel y Bermúdez said referring to the fact that at present the two countries are subjected to equally unjust and extremely severe sanctions.

'I would like to thank you again for the firm and consistent stand taken by the Russian Orthodox Church against the blockade imposed on Cuba and for the solidarity you have always shown with regard to Cuba, especially in this difficult time',

'At our today's meeting, I would like to assert once again Cuba's desire to preserve and build up the relations of friendship, solidarity and respect for the Russian Orthodox Church', the President of Cuba pointed out. He also said that people in Cuba remember with gratitude precisely the fact that Havana became in 2016 the place of the historic meeting between His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Pope Francis of Rome.

Mr. Miguel Mario Díaz-Canel y Bermúdez noted that people in Cuba always look forward to the coming of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The President of Cuba also pointed out the role and importance of the Russian church of Our Lady of Kazan. 'I would like to say that the parish in its work reaches out not only for the Russian-speaking Orthodox population but also ordinary citizens of Cuba, as the church holds many religious as well as cultural events', he stressed.

The sides discussed the topics raised as well as a number of issues of mutual concern.