



Metropolitan Feofan of Kazan and Tatarstan 1947 - 2020

It is with a sense of great sadness we note the passing of Metropolitan Feofan of Kazan and Tatarstan. He was for some years the key partner on the Russian side of the religious section of the Dartmouth Conference, a track that seeks to listen and understand the differences and possibilities of religious engagement between the United States and the Russian Federation.

Metropolitan Feofan was an experienced hand at dialogue and a natural leader to express the diverse voices he represented. But he was much more than that, bringing with his religious leadership a sense of good will and good spirits that will be sorely missed at the dialogue table. At a time where trust between our two countries is at a premium, Metropolitan Feofan imbued every conversation with a desire both to seek the best approaches and a willingness to listen and find joint paths. His experience and influence within the Christian Church and peerless associations to other religious faiths, especially Islam, as well as his deep and warm connections in Russian public life, facilitated meetings and travel inside that country that enabled American religious leaders to get a better sense of this crucial area of Russian experience that otherwise might have been closed. He was a towering figure inside the religious community there.

Alongside this openhearted approach, the Metropolitan was still a vigorous defender of his orthodox religious beliefs and practices, but his life and work showed that it is possible to disagree and still find ways to seek the common good, even in an area as tender and often fixed as religious belief and praxis. His loss – and his broad warm smile – will be hard to replace in the Dartmouth Conference and beyond.

In short, he was a genuine partner in the work of dialogue between our two countries.

In a larger sense, the passing of such a man reminds us that the pandemic and turbulence we are living through as a world know no boundaries; and that in the end, we face our challenges as one human species, united in the common destiny of our planet and its challenges. The differences between us pale into insignificance at such a time and make it imperative that we find the better pathways for which Metropolitan Feofan was so true an advocate, and which make the Dartmouth Conference so valuable a vehicle.

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