

**02.11.05** - Foundation of "The Association of Teachers of Religion and Theology in Eastern Europe"

On the 5th and 6th of October, one of the teachers of our seminary, Anton Tikhomirov, participated in an international conference of academic theology which took place here in St. Petersburg; the conference was entitled "Social Ethics in Theological and Religious Education," and participants in the conference received information about many aspects of the contemporary problems facing theological and religious education.

The most important result of the conference was the foundation of the "Association of Teachers of Religion and Theology in Eastern Europe," which is to unite both teachers of religious studies and teachers of confessional theology.

The founders of the Association signed a declaration, which both secular and confessional teachers of religion could agree on, outlining acceptable approaches to religious education. In the document particularly underlined were the necessity of wide cooperation between religious groups and the systems of secular education and finding methods for teaching that cross the secular/religious dividing line for the enrichment of the education process. The document also pointed out the unacceptability of the exploitation of religion for political, ideological, ethnic or national-state interests.

The most important goal of the Association is to unite the efforts of teachers in order to eradicate the effects of totalitarianism and state-sponsored atheism in culture and to augment the spread of enlightenment concerning religious culture and values. Being open both for secular and for ecclesiastical (and also for non-Christian) teachers of religion, this association is a unique and very interesting project in which the participants of the conference place great hope.