

BRILLIANT CONCELEBRATION BY THE ORTHODOX PRIMATES IN MOSCOW

On 4th December 2017, **His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria**, officiated at the Patriarchal Concelebration at the Cathedral of the Saviour in Moscow, before the shrine of St Tykhon, concelebrated by Their Beatitudes the Patriarchs Theophilos of Jerusalem, Kirill of Moscow, Daniel of Romania and Irenaios of Serbia. The Archbishops Chrysostomos of Cyprus, Anastasios of Albania, Savvas of Poland, Rastislav of the Czech Republic, Onouphrios of the Ukraine, Tykhon of America and Canada and representatives of the Churches of Georgia and Bulgaria also concelebrated.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy the Primate of the Alexandrian Church made an address on the occasion of the festivities for the centennial celebration of the re-establishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow.

"With the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we commune with you today at the Cathedral of the Saviour Christ and as members of the Lord's Body, as members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, we give witness of unity in the modern world...", he said. "During this year, our sister Orthodox Church of Russia honours the re-establishment of the Patriarchal Institution, which followed the period of the cruel persecution against the Church, as well as the convening of the Clergy-Laity Local Synod. Many of the participants in the Synaxis, endured persecutions, and were then numbered amongst the Saints as Holy New Martyrs and Confessors, as were St Tykhon Patriarch of Russia, the Confessor. The figure of the Saint Hierarch Tykhon, reveals the essence and the power of faith. Faith is not an ordinary psychological conviction,

but a fact of total renewal and union with Christ, for a share in and communion with His new God-given human nature. Only with this holy faith of Christ, which is the beginning of our union with God, as noted by St Seraphim of Sarov, can we endure, as did Tykhon the Confessor, and to give witness of the Lord, to not fear and to know how responsible our lives are as Christians, because "we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth".

At the end of his address, Patriarch Theodoros said: "It is for this reason that we thank the Triune God, who deemed us worthy today to be with you and to participate in these festivities. We thank you for the hospitality of Abraham which you have afforded us, we embrace in the Lord the concelebrating holy Hierarchs and paternally bless the noble and faithful Russian people, praying that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, will look down on this vineyard of our sister Church of Russia and keep it secure to the ages of ages".

Immediately thereafter, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow said: "On this festive day, with the gathering together of the Primates and representatives of all the Orthodox Churches according to the will of God, which is good and perfect (Romans 12:2), coming together in the Holy Church of the Saviour in the capital city of Moscow, my heart is filled with spiritual gladness, that we had the opportunity, I and the people of God, to offer the Bloodless Sacrifice of the Eucharist for all and on behalf of all. Truly it was an ecumenical Divine Liturgy, in the bonds of love, bringing together people of all ages, social standing and position, those living in various countries, but belonging to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church... I wish to express particular appreciation to all the noble guests, those leading the representatives of their local Churches and for their participation, which multiplied the joy of the festive celebrations, on the occasion of the centennial of the re-establishment of the

Patriarchal Institution in the Orthodox Church of Russia, an event of much importance as well as significance. I deeply appreciate the fraternal emotions and wishes expressed, the support through prayer and the visible witness of Orthodox unity, which was so convincingly expressed during these blessed days of our communication and socializing”, said Patriarch Kirill.

“Today the Lord calls us to new tireless efforts, and He expects from us dedicated contribution, fiery preaching and rich works of love. Let us work with zeal, being of good comfort and living in peace (2 Corinthians 13:11), looking forward to Divine Grace, which always cures all ills and relieving what we lack” concluded the Primate of the Russian Church.

On the afternoon of the same day, the Primates and Heads of the Representatives of the Orthodox Churches, met with His Excellency Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation.

In his address, President Putin welcome the guests, expressing fervent gratitude for their presence in Moscow.

Then the Alexandrian Primate Theodoros II, addressed the President on behalf of the Orthodox Churches, saying: *“Together with all the Primates of the Holy Orthodox Churches and their Entourages, we have the great joy of visiting our sister Orthodox Church of Russia, which is the dominant spiritual power of your blessed country, so that we may participate in the festivities for the centennial of the re-establishment of the Patriarchate of Moscow. We feel that we are visiting a beloved and dear in all things nation.*

Mr. President,

Orthodoxy today is called on to be seen to be worthy in the crucial times that the nations, cultures and mankind in general face.

The noble and Christ-loving Russian people, are defined for their love of their country, their genuine piety and their close spiritual relations with the Church and the Monastic life. Orthodoxy in Russia, having come through the trials of the past, is sturdy and strong. Of course, this is due to the Crucifixion-Resurrection basis of the Church of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and to His true words, "the gates of Hades cannot contain Him". All this creates in our hearts feelings of pride, satisfaction and emotional exultation.

Mr. President our emotions are apparent and great. From His Beatitude Patriarch and beloved friend Kirill, your worthy and tireless Primate, we have been briefed on your great and productive activities, for the good path and progress of the hospitable and noble people of Russia. You are a man of many talents, a unique personality well known for your sensitivities and your love for our Orthodox Church. I personally assure you Mr. President, that we as a Patriarchate will always be beside you and will be with you in every request for assistance, we will pray that you will have health and strength in your noble work, both you, your family, your colleagues and the Christ-loving people of Russia.

Your Excellency Mr. President, We pray that the God of love, peace and justice will keep you well always, and will strengthen you in your high office. May you always have health and every joy. In you we greet the entire noble people of Russia and we pray for their progress.

On behalf of all, to the honourable Government of Russia, through your honoured Person, we bestow the wholehearted Patriarchal prayers and blessings of the Apostle Mark, Founder of the Alexandrian Church. We thank you for this wonderful and most emotional welcome".

In conclusion, the President of Russia hosted a lunch in honour of the Primates, where they had the opportunity of sharing views on various contemporary problems.

It is worth mentioning, that during the private meeting between Patriarch Theodoros with President Putin, which took place in a very warm climate, the President told His Beatitude that he had spoken telephonically with His Excellency Mr Sisi President of Egypt and that they agreed to meet soon.