



DECR chairman sends greetings to His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia on 10th anniversary of his Primatial ministry

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, sent a message of greetings to the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of his election and Patriarchal enthronement. The message reads:

Your Holiness,

Please accept my heartiest greetings with the 10th anniversary of your enthronement.

At a time of difficulties the Serbian Orthodox Church has found in you a wise and vastly experienced Primate who enjoys love of millions of believers and high authority in the Orthodox world.

In a number of regions where the Serbian Church has been present for centuries she is once again undergoing threats and oppression. The churches and monasteries which are facing confiscation today are not only monuments of the past, but also an important part of the present-day spiritual life of the people, for "in the Church the past is always present" (St Justin of Ćelije, *Joy To Be Human*).

Maintaining close contacts with your flock, you visit your beloved spiritual children in the Old Serbia and Republika Srpska, in Montenegro and in every place where people look forward to lift up prayers together with Your Holiness, inspired by your paternal exhortations and calls for the strengthening of the unity.

You have done very much for the development of brotherly relations between our two Churches. You are loved and known in the Russian Orthodox Church, whose welcome guest you have been on numerous occasions. We are grateful to Your Holiness for your open and principled support for the suffering canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Joining all those who are sharing with you today the joy of your spiritual celebration, I prayerfully wish to Your Holiness peace, blessed bodily strength and God's unceasing help in your lofty and laborious Patriarchal ministry.

With respectful love in the Lord,

