



## **Speech by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill at the session of Supreme Church Council on 11th December 2019**

*On 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia chaired a session of the Supreme Church Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. His Holiness delivered an opening speech. Its text is given below.*

I greet all the members of the Supreme Church Council.

We are holding a session of the Supreme Church Council, the last one this year. In this circle and at this table we are gathering for the last time in 2019, therefore, we can already summarize its results.

It was not an easy year – for our Church it was full of ordeals, but at the same time of manifestations of God’s mercy. On the one hand, we have become eyewitnesses of the aftermaths of the violation of the canonical norms; on the other hand, we have contemplated the unity of hierarchs, clergy and laity both within our Church and throughout the Orthodox world, preserving the faith and canonical purity of Orthodoxy.

We see that in the Greek church world, within the Churches of Alexandria and Greece, hierarchs, clerics and laypeople clearly expressed their opposition to the trample on the canons. For these people, just like for us, the unity of Churches is the absolute value; they consider it inadmissible to exchange this unity for the sympathy of the mighty of this world; they share the pain of and sympathize with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church jeopardized by the anti-canonical actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Our prayers and efforts were aimed at giving support to our brothers in Ukraine, where by the mercy of God the pressure upon the believers of the canonical Church decreased. The declaration on non-interference in church affairs, issued by President Zelensky, demonstrates that the state authority has now taken the only right position of not interfering in church disputes and not putting pressure on, among others, our canonical Church.

However, I have to say that the threat of interference in the affairs of the Church is still real, since not everyone in power in Ukraine has rejected the policy which was formulated by the former president and implied such interference. Yet, we see how adamant the children of our Church are in their position. Their fortitude and dignity are ever more evident against the background of endless strife among the Ukrainian schismatics and among their patrons. What is now going on within the schism indicates that it is ungraced. When the grace of God forsakes, people’s consciousness becomes darkened, passions

overpower canonical responsibility, and a schism always gives rise to new schisms. We see the new deepest conflicts arise among the schismatics – such is the inexorable logic of any schism.

We shared the Paschal joy with our brothers and sisters from the Archdiocese of Western Europe who returned to the bosom of the Mother Church. The Merciful Lord turned into good all the attempts, canonically vain, to abolish this structure. It allowed us to put a long-awaited end to the story of division of the Russian church community abroad.

No matter what awaits us in the year 2020, we must always remember the words of the Saviour: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Lk 12:32). It is obvious that in the upcoming year we will have to respond to many challenges, make new endeavours aimed at strengthening the canonical purity of Orthodoxy, exert ever greater effort to preserve the unity of the Church, and in the places, where this unity was undermined, make attempts to find it again. We hope that the Lord will show us His mercy and help us in fulfilling the major task on the pan-Orthodox scale – to restore the unity and overcome the corrupting baneful power of schismatics who, indeed, bring dangerous seeds of discord and opposition.

Let us hope that by the mercy of God the schism will not spread, but, on the contrary, will be withering away. The Lord called all of us to be faithful to Him even unto death, and this faithfulness must manifest itself, among other things, in defending the unity of the Church. Today no one calls us to die as martyrs, but we all are called to be firm and resolute in preserving the unity of the Holy Orthodoxy, in remaining faithful to the canonical order of the Church.

With these words I would like to open the session, the last one this year.

*DECR Communication Service/*

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