JOHN X Patriarch of Antioch and All the East Homily on the Tenth Anniversary of Patriarch Kirill's Enthronement

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Moscow, February 1, 2019

Your Holiness,
Your Beatitudes, Eminences, Reverend Monastics,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

With deep heartfelt emotion, I express my joy to be with Your Holiness on this blessed day, and to celebrate together this Holy Eucharist, with the participation of our brother Patriarch Irenaeus of the Church of Serbia, and our brothers, the representatives of the Orthodox Churches and all present bishops and faithful in this holy church, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow. We lift up our prayers to the Lord, that He may cause you to increase in grace, to strengthen you and grant you good health, well-being, and long life, so that you may continue your care for the Church of Russia, with love and wisdom for many years.

We thank God, Who chose you ten years ago to lead this Patriarchate, this Holy See, beautified by the greatness that crowned your predecessors, including Patriarch Tikhon, whom we celebrated the centennial of his election in December 2017. We always remember the Russian Church's labor and Her faithful's sufferings during the last century, in order to preserve the Right Faith in the time of atheism and oppression.

Here, I recall, beloved brother, the labor of your priestly family, which cleaved to the Church in the darkest conditions of history, and the sufferings your grandfather and father endured as priests, the sufferings which you, as an Orthodox family, shared in Your Confessing Church.

We cannot but recollect your personal spiritual experience in those difficult times, the times of the communist rule, which had its own means and methods of persecuting the Church and Her faithful, at times when atheism was creative in pressuring the believers and inciting propaganda against the clergy. Thus, we admire your steadfastness on the rock of faith and your long struggle for the preservation of

Orthodoxy in Russia

On this blessed day, we gives thanks to the Lord,
Who has strengthened you with His grace and compassion, so that you may overpass this fiery furnace,
Who has given you the joy to hear again the ringing of Church bells that were for a period of time silenced throughout the territory of Russia,

Who has allowed you to behold again the crosses held high on the top of the golden church domes after they were demolished or removed, and to rejoice in seeing the your faithful children filling the holy temples that are growing in number day by day, and practicing their faith freely, and the monasteries crowded with monks and nuns, praying uninterruptedly, day and night, and offering spiritual care.

We rejoice, most honorable brother, to see you leading the Sister Church of Russia in the time of freedom, having witnessed to the Orthodox faith in the time of atheism and oppression, and seeing you putting to use all of your spiritual experience, which was enriched by new heroic martyrs and confessors in your church, in order to reconstruct and enliven a spiritual renaissance, which is now flourishing in the Church of Russia today. What doubles our joy is to witness the “great miracle,” which is the preservation of the Orthodox Church, which survived the horrors of long and cruel persecution, and the miracle of the return of many people to the faith of their parents, grandparents and forefathers, especially since the external circumstances of the Russian Orthodox Church’s life during the Soviet era would not have allowed for laying the foundations for such a rapid resurgence that we see today.

Beloved Brother in the Lord,

The history of your Church in the time of atheism shows that the wicked, in his war against the Church, used all possible means, and sometimes worked through the Church’s children and shepherds in order to weaken Her from within, by provoking unrest and schisms. However, history itself teaches us that all forms of persecution cannot affect the Church, if She remains faithful to Her Teacher, and to the spiritual Truth that She carries. This is what Your Holiness have experienced, yourself and your great Russian people.

Therefore, in the midst of the storm we are experiencing, Christianity in general and Orthodoxy in particular face an increasing attack by the consumer society and its new idols, which claim to be able, in the name of irresponsible freedom, to bring happiness and prosperity to today's human being. Also, the world powers use the Church as a toll for their policies and interests, seeking to weaken Her witness in the world, and to divide Her into national churches. Thus, we are more than ever required to activate our fraternal cooperation and strengthen the bonds between the sister Orthodox Churches and among their believers.

The Orthodox Churches that suffered from the horrors of persecution in the last century, have embarked on the path of the common witness to Christ and to the beauty of Orthodoxy, since His All-Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras of Thrice Blessed Memory, invited them to the Rhodes Conference in 1961. Since then, our relations have fostered a rule called by His All-Holiness and his assistants: the "Holy Unanimity", because he knew that this unanimity, while requiring a great effort to build consensus, saves our One Church from individualism and from the great tyranny of the old on the young, or the strong on the weak. It always preserves the Orthodox Church from the fragmentation that was known in the first decades of the last century, and which was caused by political pressures or unilateral, factional decisions, taken by this church or that, or this group or that, with no consideration for their implications on the Orthodox Church as a whole.

Therefore, we reiterate today the position advocated by our Holy Synod of Antioch for years, which calls for using this holy principle, as the approach to work on all matters. Perhaps, we can thus remove politics, ethnicity, populism, power influence, self-interests and money from the Orthodox Church, and work on activating our common witness to Christ, the Risen Lord and Conqueror of every indolence or death in our world today.

While we are in this joyous occasion, I do not want to express my deep, heartily pain and great sorrow towards what is happening in our Orthodox Church these days and Her affliction as a result of individuality, lack of dialogue, and absence of conciliarity, and of what happened recently in Ukraine. But I have to stress that it is time for us to raise our voices. The silence before these deviations is abhorrent, if it does not turn into prayer and supplications. I appeal to all our brothers, their Holinesses and Beatitudes, the primates of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches to gather and meet in order to proclaim our commitment to the unity of our Holy Orthodox Church, and our belief that Her light coming from the Light of Christ remains bright and glorious.

Finally, in the name of our Antiochian Church, especially in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, the Arabian Gulf, all the Antiochians living in countries abroad, and all who are suffering from the horrors of war, kidnapping, economic hardship, displacement and homelessness, and through the prayers of the Archbishops of Aleppo Youhana (Ibrahim) and Paul (Yazigi) who have been absent for more than five years, we supplicate the Lord God in these difficult days that He may grant Your Holiness, your Church and your faithful, wisdom, strength and steadfastness. We thank your Holy Church, His Excellency President Putin, and the Russian State for all that they have provided and made for the Church of Antioch and Her believers. On my behalf, and on behalf of my brothers present here from the various Orthodox Churches, I reiterate my wishes that God may keep you in His love and compassion, through the prayers of Most Pure Theotokos and all the saints shining in the Churches of Antioch and Russia.

God grant You Many Years, “health and length of days, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”

Many Years Master!

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