Patriarch Kirill celebrates thanksgiving at the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tirana

April 28, 2018 – His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, who is on a visit to the Albanian Orthodox Church, celebrated thanksgiving at the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tirana.

Among those who prayed on the soleas were His Beatitude Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania, and members of the Holy Synod of the Albanian Orthodox Church.

The church, which accommodates thousands, was filled with a multitude of the faithful.

After the singing of hymns, Archbishop Anastasios addressed Patriarch Kirill with Paschal greetings in three languages. He said,

'It is with Paschal joy, profound respect and fraternal love that we welcome you, Your Beatitude and Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, at the Cathedral of the Resurrection in the heart of the Albanian capital city, with the words: 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord. This time you have come as Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, which, in the previous century came through fire and water, and the Lord led her out to joy, to a new period of flourishing. A few months ago, in November 2017, in Moscow, we marked one hundred years since the beginning of a terrible anti-religious persecution that shook the universe. As still a young man, I watched the heroism of Orthodox clergy and laity that they displayed during the ruthless atheistic persecution in the Soviet Union.

'You, my dearest holy brother, in your childhood and youth, had to go through all kinds of trials brought by the anti-religious storm, which you survived thanks to the living faith and steadfastness laid down in the spiritual DNA of your devout family. With enthusiasm you bravely decided to dedicate yourself to the Church', Archbishop Anastasios stressed addressing Patriarch Kirill.

His Beatitude said that the Albanian Orthodox Church, too, experienced severe persecution in the 20th century: 'Beginning from 1968, something unique in the world history happened as in its Constitution Albania officially proclaimed itself as an atheistic state and religious faith was forcibly and savagely buried in it for as long as twenty three years. In the 1980s, all those who followed the developments came to the conclusion that the Albanian Church disappeared from the map for good. But, thank God, since 1991 we have lived with the breath and joy of the Resurrection. It is widely known that the

Orthodox Autocephalous Albanian Church, restored on the only solid foundation, which is Christ, continues developing in the rays of Paschal light.

‘With the feelings of heartfelt fraternal love and profound respect we meet you today, Holy Brother Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and from the bottom of our hearts wish that, through the interception of St. Cyril whose name you bear, you may continue your church service relying on his God-moved wisdom and dreams. May God glorified in the Trinity grant you many years of life, good health, ardent faith and the Cross-Resurrection way of thinking so that, led by the Holy Spirit, you may lead the devout Russian people to constant spiritual bearing fruits, radiating the light of the Cross and Resurrection in today’s era’, the Primate of the Albanian Church said in conclusion.

Patriarch Kirill spoke in response, saying,

‘Your Beatitude, beloved fellow-archpastors, honorable fathers, dear brothers and sisters,

Christ Is Risen!

‘Thank you, Your Beatitude and the Holy Synod of the Albanian Orthodox Church for the kind greeting and invitation to visit the Albanian land.

‘Here, in a country of old Christian heritage tracing back to the works of St. Paul, in a country in which the Holy Martyr Astius the Bishop of Dyrrhachiumm, the Holy Martyr John of Albania and many other men of God performed their feats, in which the outstanding missionary St. Cosmas of Aetolia worked, the atmosphere of the feast of the glorious Resurrection of the Lord, God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is felt with special profundity. And this magnificent cathedral, a visible symbol of the resurrection of the Albanian Orthodox Church is dedicated, too, to the Resurrection of Christ.

The triumph of the Resurrection was preceded by Golgotha. In the 20th century, both of our Churches had an experience of partaking in the suffering of Christ as churches were destroyed, shrines were trampled upon, and numerous clergy, monastics and laity endured suffering and suffered martyrdom in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy of our salvation thus hoped to sow spiritual death among the peoples nourished by our Churches, but contrary to the expectations of persecutors, the faith resurrected and came back to life, for the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christianity.

‘The Lord sent forth his mercy and his truth (cf. Ps. 56:4), and the Albanian Orthodox Church, fully destroyed previously, has risen in new glory, asserted through the selfless primatial efforts of Your Beatitude.

‘I have come here with bright hopes. We cherish the present opportunity to share with you the joy of the Holy Pascha of Christ, to be comforted together with you by the mutual faith (cf. Rom. 1:12) and to venerate the shrines of the Albanian land. I hope that, God willing, my visit of peace will open a new page in the relations between our Local Orthodox Sister Churches.’

After the service, the Primates of the Russian and Albanian Churches inspected the Chapel of the Nativity of Christ, a part of the cathedral church compound.

DECR Communication Service

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