Message by the Holy Episcopal Council to the Clergy, Monks and Nuns and All Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church

The Episcopal Council, which took place in Moscow from the 29th Of November to the 2nd of December 20,17 has sent a message to the clergy, monks and nuns and all faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Beloved in the Lord all-venerable fathers, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters,

The Holy Episcopal Council, which took place in Moscow from the 29th of November to the 2nd of December 2017 in the city of Moscow in the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour, greets all of you with the words of the apostolic salutation: “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rm 15.5-6).

In giving praise to the Creator, Provider and Giver of all good things, we prayerfully recollect the most important events in the history of our Church, the hundred anniversary of which is being marked this year. This is the opening of the Holy Council of the Orthodox Church of Russia in 1917-1918 and the restoration at it of the Office of Patriarch.

One of the main acts of the Council – the election of the holy bishop Tikhon to the Patriarchal Throne of Moscow – coincided with the beginning of the cruel persecution of God’s Church. Our land was soaked red with the innocent blood of the first martyrs in modern history. Soon iniquity and arbitrariness in relation to the Church became commonplace. In these persecutions and sufferings for Christ a great multitude of the faithful children of the Church made manifest the greatest heroic deed of faith and courage, accepted death and the “crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pt 5.4). It was a time of dreadful tribulation for all of the peoples of our Fatherland. As a result, the country stood on the brink of destruction. But by the prayers of St. Tikhon and the host of new martyrs and confessors of the Church of Russia, the Lord bestowed his mercy upon the people and did not allow evil to triumph definitely. Today we exclaim with thanksgiving together with the Psalmist: “The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death” (Ps 117.18).

In remembering the tragic events of the twentieth century and meditating on their cause, we must with deep humility and sincere conviction bear witness before those close to us and those afar to the main

lesson of the past century: without God no state or social building can ever lead to prosperity. History has shown that revolutionary attitudes, generated by political provocations, including those that appeal to social justice, are ruinous for the state and destructive for people. Representatives of all layers of society must exert all their efforts in avoiding the repetition of errors which led in the last century to the suffering and deaths of many people and to the destruction of our statehood.

We testify to the unchanging nature of the Church's mission, which the Saviour has purchased with his own precious blood (cf. Acts 20.28) in order to bring people into oneness with God. All labourers in Christ's vineyard must remember that the foundation stone of the Church's preaching from the holy apostles to the end of the world is the joyful news of salvation granted through the cross and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The most important thing to which a pastor is called is the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, since the offering of the Bloodless Sacrifice of thanksgiving "for all and behalf of all" is the greatest and most significant of all possible deeds on earth.

In glorifying "with one mouth and one heart" the heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ we, the members of the Holy Episcopal Council, bear witness to the fact that through the prayerful intercession before the Throne of the Almighty of the new martyrs and confessors of the Church of Russia, through the labours of a multitude of bishops, clerics, monks and nuns and laity, the cause of building up the Church continues to develop. Holy sites are being restored, new churches are being built, numerous inmates of Orthodox monasteries take upon themselves the great feat of the monastic life, the number of Church charity projects is growing, and the Church's work in supporting the family, mothers and children is getting stronger. Special joy is evoked by the success in the field of working with youth, including the development of volunteer service in the dioceses and parishes, as well as in bringing children to the faith through Sunday schools and other Church educational projects.

The days of the Episcopal Council have brought us the joy of communicating with the First Hierarchs and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches who have come to Moscow to participate in the festivities on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the enthronement as Patriarch of the holy bishop Tikhon. This visible expression of Orthodox unity has special meaning today, when many Christians who are persecuted for their faith need our ardent prayer and active intercession. We cherish Christian solidary because we know how important and necessary it is to those who now have to endure adversities and tribulations in the same way as the support of all people of good will during the time of the persecution of the faith and the Church in our Russian homeland was. Yes, by God's grace we have once more raised up magnificent cathedrals, our churches are being adorned and reflect beauty in their construction. However, we must not forget those who are driven out of their churches, who are blown up and murdered by terrorists. We are called upon to defend courageously and steadfastly the Christian values which are today being edged out of the lives of many nations. The example of the of the first apostolic communities, when the affluent sent material aid to the less well off, inspires us to care for

those Orthodox Christians who are experiencing hardships and suffering from war or terrorism.

In the days of the Episcopal Council we became acquainted with the preliminary results of research undertaken with the aim of identifying the “Yekaterinburg remains.” We express the hope that at the completion of this research the truth will be revealed regarding the provenance of the aforementioned remains.

With thanksgiving to the good dispensation of God, the Council testifies to the showing forth of a whole host of saints for church-wide veneration.

In recalling the trials that were endured by our fathers and now being endured by many Christians, let us preserve the unity of the Church in praying at each service for the “well-being of the holy Church of God and the union of all,” as Christ prayed for the united of Christians and that they may lead peaceful lives.

“Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all” (2 Thess 3.16). Amen.

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