HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL: “COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA IS A CHANCE TO SPEAK ABOUT THE GOSPEL IN AN ACCESIBLE LANGUAGE ON ISSUES WHICH AFFECT TODAY’S PEOPLE”

“To spread the Good News has been an integral part of the Church since apostolic times. At the same time, we today encounter such technologies of working with words which have no analogy in the past,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia emphasized in his speech at the Episcopal Council of 2017. “Society is heading towards more openness in the information field and towards the dissemination of the maximum amount of information. In these conditions a special responsibility lies upon bishops and their aides in mutual interaction with the media when communicating in the media sphere.”

The First Hierarch reminded listeners that in the information sphere the most important task is “to fill the information expanse with reliable facts on Church ministry, at the centre of which is the preaching of Christ and pastoral responses to the challenges of the modern-day world” (Acts of the Episcopal Council of 2014, no.43).

Patriarch Kirill valued highly the press service of the Synodal Department for Church Charity and Social Ministry, “thanks to which a wide circle of people have been able to get to know the endeavours of many church labourers who care for the downtrodden.”

“This success in the information sphere has led to a strengthening of the support given to the Church’s social and charity projects,” noted His Holiness the Patriarch. “It is important that media work in this direction be limited not merely to media releases. Material of public and social interest appears in the secular and Church media, in particular, with the thoughts of representatives of the Church and society on social ministry in its Gospel understanding. In other words, the information expanse is filled not only by facts, but by ideas grounded in the Word of God. The Church, through her media activities dedicated to social ministry, continues to preach Christ.”

“In the inter-council period much has been achieved in the use of the technological opportunities for the preaching of the Gospel,” Patriarch Kirill noted with satisfaction. “More and more dioceses and parishes are actively putting content into their sites and developing their mobile versions and pages in social networks. The TV channel *Spas* has been improved significantly. We may add that Radio Vera’s

expansion on the airwaves has been a breakthrough. The Synodal Department for Interaction between Church, Society and the Media has carried out a great deal or work in strengthening its cooperation with the dioceses. The unification of the Church's information expanse, understood as the coordination of all of the Church's media resources, but with the retention of their autonomy and specific nature, is moving ahead and continues to be a priority task."

"The information expanse is not simply technology. It is also the sum total of ideas and meanings," continued His Holiness the Patriarch. "When the diocesan press services manage to achieve numerous republications in the regional press of the messages of the diocesan bishop on a particular feast day, this is an important result, but we should not stop at this and think that our work is done. It is not enough also that the local media give out information on services or Church events. Dialogue with media representatives, including regional ones, ought to transcend the spirit of officialdom and, if possible, presupposes the active participation of bishops and clergy."

"Communicating with the media is a chance to speak about the Gospel in an accessible language on issues which affect today's people. The most widespread media genre today is stories about concrete people, about their life and interests. These stories sometimes touch upon profound social or moral problems. Indeed, we often find in the life of our parishes many interesting stories on how modern-day Christians live and actively take part in society. Finally, it is important that the lives of the dioceses and parishes be more actively reflected at a church-wide level," Patriarch Kirill stressed.

"The quality of media work in many ways depends upon the personal attention that the bishop devotes to it. Otherwise we cannot expect any significant results from the diocesan media substructures. In particular, it is essential that the director of the corresponding department should have direct working contact with the bishop. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, although in many dioceses we can see successful examples of an active media presence with the participation of the diocesan bishop," concluded the First Hierarch of the Russian Church.

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