HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH KIRILL: THE MAIN HERITAGE OF THE NEW MARTYRS IS THEIR LOVE OF CHRIST AND NEIGHBOUR, FOR WHOM THEY LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES

“This year we recall the beginning, exactly one hundred years ago, of the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church, which has in the twentieth century given to the world a host of martyrs and confessors whose blood, as the early Christians apologist Tertullian said, is the ‘seed of Christianity.’ The most important treasure handed down to us by the new martyrs and confessors of the Church of Russia is their love of Christ and neighbor, for whom they laid down their lives (cf. Jn 15.13),” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia stressed when giving his presentation at the Episcopal Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, which opened on 29th November 2017. As His Holiness the Patriarch noted, we live today in completely different conditions that are more favourable, but we are called upon to follow the example of the new martyrs in their active love of God and people. “Our love of the new martyrs ought to be expressed in preserving a living witness to their great deeds,” the First Hierarch stated with conviction.

The hundredth anniversary of the beginning of persecution is inextricably linked to the sad anniversary of the 1917 Revolution and the beginning of the Russian civil war, His Holiness the Patriarch reminded his listeners, stressing that St. Tikhon of Moscow had prophetically heralded the main lesson of the tragic trials of the twentieth century in his sermon for the New Year of 1918: “The past year was a year of building up the State of Russia. Yet alas! Does it not remind us of the sad experience of the construction of Babylon?.. See, O Lord, how we have been humiliated and has there ever been such a disease as this that has befallen us?.. And all of this destruction and want is a result of Russia being built without God… We will never succeed in anything unless we recall God without whom nothing good can ever come (Jn 15.5) and until we turn to him with all our heart and all our mind (Mt 22.37).” “We who belong to the Church are called upon to bear witness to the fact that it is meaningless to build up the life of the human person and society without God,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill noted. “We will be able to resist such attitudes only if we keep in our hearts a living and sincere faith – a faith which is active through love (cf. Gal 5.6). This faith will be our means of forever confessing Christ the Saviour and the foundation of our everyday affairs that go beyond the observance of ritual.”

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