



## **Patriarch Kirill blesses monument marking 10th anniversary of restoration of unity of Russian Orthodox Church**



June 18, 2017 – After the Divine Liturgy at the Church of Christ the Saviour, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia blessed the sculptor composition “Reunion” devoted to the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, signed on May 17, 2007, at the Church of Christ the Saviour. This year marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the restoration of unity of the Local Russian Orthodox Church.

Present at the ceremony were the bishops and clergy who took part in the concelebration of the liturgy and high state officials, as well as the delegation of the Coptic Church on a pilgrimage to shrines of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The composition made of bronze depicts the late Patriarch Alexy II and the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, Metropolitan Laurus of Eastern America and New York standing on

the cracked globe and holding the Church of Christ the Saviour and the signed Act.

The beginning of the work to create the monument was blessed by Patriarch Kirill in March 2011 during his meeting with the chairman of the foundation 'The Church', A. Kuznetsov.

One of the inscriptions on the pedestal reads, 'the Reunion monument is devoted to the signing of the Act of Canonical Communion on May 17, 2007, at the Church of Christ the Saviour – the reunion of the Russian and overseas parts of the Orthodox Church, signed by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia and the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, Metropolitan Laurus of Eastern America and New York, with the participation of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin. Moscow, 2017'.

After of the office of the blessing, Patriarch Kirill addressed the gathering, saying, 'The monument has been designed very wisely. It reflects the very essence of what happened in the destiny of our people and our Church. The two hierarchs – His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II and His Eminence Laurus stand on the divided Earth. And it was so: the Earth split with boundaries lying through people's lives and geographical borders. A single world split into a multitude of worlds. The Church mystically and spiritually belongs to eternity, but historically she exists in this world, and these divisions divided the historical Church, not the Body of Christ.

'But even in the most difficult years of confrontation we were well aware that there was no deep division. It was a division imposed from outside by historical circumstances forced on the Church. For many of our brothers in this country the challenge was either to preserve the Church for the people and to stop communion with those who had left the country or to refuse stopping the communion and to have the whole Church fully ruined. Nevertheless these terrible collisions endured by our fathers and grandfathers did not cloud either the church awareness or the desire of unity.

'Ten years ago a remarkable event happened – the reunion of the Russian Church. We also give their due to the Russian State and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, who, on his part, did much to help the two parts of the Church to enter into dialogue without which the reunion would be impossible. We give their due to all who worked on the Commission for Dialogue, overcoming the grave legacy of the past. We give their due to His Holiness Patriarch Alexy and His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, because after all it was on their signatures that the result depended. And they did sign off the historic document and it is in memory of it that this remarkable monument is erected at the walls of the Church of Christ the Saviour in which that historic action was accomplished. I congratulate you all on it!'

The participants in the ceremony were also addressed by the Presidential Envoy for the Central Federal Region A. Beglov, who said in particular, 'I have been instructed by the President of the Russian

Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin to congratulate you all on this remarkable event and to express gratitude on his behalf to those who strengthen our Russian Orthodox Church and those who have created this remarkable monument.

‘After the year 1917, during the revolution and the Civil War, our nation was divided, and our Church, unfortunately, was divided too. But in spite of that, a part of our people, who came to settle abroad and lived in poverty in the first years, worked to restore and build Orthodox churches, sharing every last thing. For a long time, everybody awaited the reunion, spiritual unification with their Motherland, with their country. And it happened’.

Mr. Beglov recalled that Russian President Vladimir Putin visited the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia Metropolitan Laurus and invited him to come to Russia, which happened in 2001. ‘After that, after the first steps, a difficult, complicated but necessary work of reunion began’, he said.

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The Foundation ‘The Church’ was founded in 1996. It helped to build five churches in various regions in Russia.

Through its efforts a monument to Patriarch Alexy II and Metropolitan Laurus was opened in September 2015 in the Korennaya Hermitage near Kursk. The opening of the Reunion monument was timed to the bringing to Kursk of the main shrine of the Russian Diaspora, the miracle-working Icon of the Mother of God ‘The Sign’, which is kept in the USA.

In December 2015, the Reunion monument was opened at the St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral of the diocese of Eastern America (Howell, NJ).

*Patriarchal Press Service*

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