His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrates at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on the feast day of the Synaxis of New Martyrs and Confessors of Russian Church



On 5 February 2017, the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee and the feast day of the Synaxis of New Martyrs and Confessors, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated Divine Liturgy at the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

Archimandrite Sergy (Telikha) was consecrated Bishop of Maardu, a vicar of the Tallinn diocese of the Estonian Orthodox Church.

Among those concelebrating with His Holiness were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Innokenty of Vilnius and Lithuania; Archbishop Yevgeny of Vereya, chairman of the Education Committee and rector of the Moscow Theological Academy; Bishop Alexander of Dauvgavpils and Rezekne; Bishop Lazar of Narva and Prichudie; Bishop Antony of Bogorodsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for

Institutions Abroad; Bishop Paramon of Bronnitsy, abbot of the Donskoy stavropegic monastery; Bishop Irenei of Sacramento, a vicar bishop of the Western American diocese.

Attending the service were Igor Schegolev, assistant to the President of the Russian Federation; Leonid Slutsky, chairman of the RF State Duma Committee for Foreign Affairs; Andrei Klimov, deputy chairman of the Council of Federation Committee for Foreign Affairs; and Alexander Zharov, head of the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technologies and Mass Media.

Patriarchal Choir of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour conducted by Iliya Tolkachev sang liturgical hymns.

Before the Litany of Fervent Supplication the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church offered up a prayer for peace in Ukraine.

Prayers were said for the repose of the souls of the departed servants of God, bishops, priests, deacons, monastics and laypersons who had endured terrible suffering and died as martyrs for Orthodox faith during the years of persecution in the last century.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presided led requiem litiya for the martyrs for faith in the 20th century and celebrated glorification of new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church.

In his primatial homily he brought Sunday greetings to all those present and noted that celebrating the memory of the 20th century's martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church we are beginning our preparation for Lent today.

Persecution has been permanent in history of the Church since the first days of the Christian community in Jerusalem. Modern history brought a new motivation for the persecution. Those who had power, being guided by their philosophical concepts, or, more accurately, by their fantasies, saw an ideological danger in Christianity, because the preaching of Christ elevated people and it was difficult to manipulate human conscience for the sake of achieving concrete ideological goals. Persecution against the Russian Church was launched for the sake of 'bright future.' Russian Christians were not against the established political system, they honestly confessed their faith. The demand to apostatize they said 'No, I cannot. My fidelity to Christ is above anything else, and I am prepared to die for Christ." Hundreds of thousands of our compatriots were killed, perhaps even more than in the Roman empire. Having endured many trials and suffering in the 20th century and the horrors of war, our people are coming out of this bondage. Today we can speak freely about it and ask questions without a trace of fear.

Our Church and our country give the most striking example of the failure of persecutions. Why so?

Today we heard the words of St. Paul from his Epistle to the Romans: ‘Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (8:38-39). The persecutors did not know this. They did not know that the power of God was alive in people crushed by the State. These people defended Christ, and He defended them. They all are in His Kingdom.

Today we offer up thankful prayers for new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, a symbol of the revival of faith of Holy Rus’. We know that new martyrs and confessors pray for our country and our Church.

This year we will recall events that happened one hundred years ago, and may God grant us to deliver ourselves from temptations which force people to commit horrible things allegedly for a possible wellbeing.”

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church presented church awards to the honored artists of Russia Mikhail Nozhkin and Oleg Gazmanov.

Dmitry Petrovsky, a staff member of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, was awarded the Order of St. Nicholas Equal-to-the-Apostles, Archbishop of Japan (3rd class), in consideration for his long service to the strengthening and developing of relations of the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church with her Mother-Church and in connection with his 45th birthday.

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