



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Department for External Church Relations

Patriarchal congratulations to Pope Francis of Rome on the occasion of his 80th birthday

His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, congratulated the Head of the Roman Catholic Church on his 80th birthday.

To His Holiness Francis

Pope of Rome

Your Holiness,

Please accept my most cordial congratulations on the occasion of your 80th birthday.

The life journey of Your Holiness is wholly bounded up with the service of God and the Church. Following your pastoral calling from your youth, you have devoted all your talents and aspirations to the preaching of the Word of God and active love for the neighbour. Being aware of how heavy is the cross of selfless pastoral service, I am convinced that your path has been difficult but beneficial and bringing consolation and joy to your flock. You deservedly enjoyed respect and love in your homeland where you were Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Primate of Argentine.

By the divine providence you were elected to the see of Rome and Primate of the Roman Catholic Church. For the several years of your ministry marked with peace efforts, proclamation of the love of Christ, aid to the poor and efforts to promote Christian unity, you have gained respect throughout the world.

I would like to note with joy the high degree of mutual understanding that the bilateral relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church have reached lately, including thanks to the position taken by Your Holiness. Our meeting in February in Havana will remain unforgettable for me, as it has given a new impetus to benevolent dialogue and cooperation between our two Churches for the sake of peace, justice, strengthening of moral values in society and overcoming differences among Christians.

I wish Your Holiness good health, long life, spiritual strength and all-strengthening help of God in your

lofty ministry.

As multos annos! For many and good years!

With love in the Lord,

+ KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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