Reception devoted to Patriarch Kirill's 70th birthday at the Church of Christ the Saviour

On November 20, 2016, after **the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow**, celebrated by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia together with Primates and representatives of Local Orthodox Church and an assembly of bishops and priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, a solemn lunch took place in honour of His Holiness's 70th birthday.

Congratulating the Primate of the Russian Church on the auspicious date, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa said:

> 'Your Holinesses, Your Beatitudes – Primates of Orthodox Churches:
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> 'It is a joyful day today: His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia is celebrating his birthday. In the holy of holies – the Church of Christ the Saviour, during the Divine Liturgy we prayed and wished him many good years of life.
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> 'He is a Patriarch who has devoted his whole self to Christ for all the years of his ministry, a Patriarch who works and makes efforts to give consolation to his people, a Patriarch who loves all the Churches and does not forget anybody in difficult times we are going through. Your Holiness Master Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia! The whole Church is praying for you. On behalf of all their Beatitudes Primates, I would like to raise my eyes to heaven and ask that Jesus Christ may look at your holy life and grant you many and many years of life.
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> 'You need peace; people are important for you; you take care of the poor and the youth who are asking what they will do in the future. You are like a shining star. Therefore, please accept from your fellow Patriarch-missionary, who you have known for many years, from the episcopate and laity, our wishes of many good years of life. And may your parents, from the world of eternity, and the holy Metropolitan Nikodim pray for you.
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> 'Many blessed years of life to you!'

Then congratulations were extended by His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine:

‘Your Holiness,

‘Your Beatitudes, Your Holinesses, Your Eminences and Graces, Dear Friends,

‘Your Holiness, we would like to convey best regards from our Church, from the Holy Sepulcher of the Lord and from the Church in the Holy Land.

‘We always celebrate the birthdays of people, Churches and whole nations. These birthdays remind us of a new life, of resurrection. Today we are celebrating the memory of martyrs in Melitene and bear witness to the fact that martyrdom is also a kind of birth. During our solemn celebration today we heard the Gospel’s words about the resurrection of a young woman, which is a prototype of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

‘And the Divine Liturgy, too, is a reminder of our own re-birth. Despite our human weakness, our limitations, we experience in the Liturgy a spiritual re-birth. Whenever we celebrate together, our relations are reborn. During communion, the Lord, by His mercy and love, allowed us to feel alive and reborn in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

‘We also pray for the renewal of the Koubouklia in the Church of the Lord’s Sepulcher. As St. Paul writes in the Letter to the Ephesians, the Lord enjoined us to be adopted children of Jesus Christ. In this process we also experience a re-birth. The restoration of the Church of the Lord’s Sepulcher is a tangible testimony to the unity of our Churches. Though the tomb itself is empty, it is still a source of a new life for us and the cup we carry.

‘The Eucharist is the very essence of our Church. Every time we take communion, we also partake of a new life.

‘Therefore, our celebration today together with Your Holiness, with Primates of other Orthodox Churches, with bishops, monastics and priests as well as all the lay people is another testimony to the true conciliarity and unity of our Church. This unity continues to be the most important element and legacy of the Holy Spirit.

‘We would like to use this opportunity to congratulate Your Holiness on this blessed day on behalf of the whole Church of Jerusalem and wish you many years of primatial ministry.

‘We also would like to use this opportunity to express our gratitude to the President Putin of the Russian Federation, too, for his being a steadfast defender of traditional values – the values of the Bible, against liberal values prevailing in many countries. We thank him for his support for

the Church in general and our Church in particular.

‘May the Russian people be blessed and may Our Lord grant peace and reconciliation in the Holy City of Jerusalem and in the Holy Land, which is a common home for us all’.

Congratulations to Patriarch Kirill were also offered by the first patriarchal vicar for Moscow, Metropolitan Arseny of Istra, the first deputy head of the Presidential Administration S. Kirienko, presidential envoy for Central Russia A. Beglov, Deputy Prime Minister S. Prikhodko, and Moscow Mayor S. Sobyanin.

Patriarch Kirill addressed himself to those present with words of gratitude.

After the fraternal repast, Patriarch Kirill received congratulations from bishops, representatives of synodal departments, abbots of patriarchal monasteries and from the clergy.

Patriarchal Press Service

DECR Communication Service

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