Message of greetings from members of Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on his 70th birthday

On 20 November 2016, a message of greetings from the members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on his 70th birthday was read out after the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.

His Holiness KIRILL

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia

Your Holiness, our Most Holy Vladyka and merciful Father,

Having gathered together under the vaults of this Moscow cathedral to partake in the Feast of Love – the Holy Eucharist – and having glorified *our Lord God, Who art mighty in counsel, and wonderful in His deeds*, we all, the archpastors, pastors, monastics and laypeople, have zealously prayed for your health, and now ask you to accept our sincere filial greetings with Your Holiness' 70th birthday.

Since childhood, your heart has been filled with love for God and His Church. The Lord has chosen you, having lavished you with various talents and endowments. Having learned from your pious parents what it meant to live in Christ and be firm in faith, gained experience in various works of ecclesiastical obedience under the guidance of your spiritual father, Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod of blessed memory, received theological education, and, being a young man, without any hesitation embarked on a difficult and important path of serving God, people and homeland.

For almost half a century now you, sparing no effort, have been carrying out zealously and tirelessly the most significant mission on earth – leading people to salvation. As a *good steward of the manifold grace of God* (1 Pet 4:10), you show to all of us an example of lofty Christian virtues: ardent faith, unshakeable hope and active love. You courageously and resolutely speak out in defence of traditional moral values, condemn hypocrisy and wickedness of this world, warn of the fatal consequences of enmity and confrontation, pray for the restoration of peace and accord in society, and remind people how necessary it is to be merciful and just. You have made a considerable contribution to the promotion of the Orthodox unity, inter-religious dialogue, relationships between the Church and the state, and international cooperation.

The steadfast witness to the Truth of God, the ardent call for repentance and reconciliation, for the spiritual and moral improvement, and for living life according to the Gospel, the homily of consolation and support – this is what makes up your pastoral message, addressed to everyone. The Russian Orthodox Church speaks with your lips; the whole world hearkens to your voice; millions of our compatriots keep their eyes on you. Verily you are the spiritual leader who enjoys particular trust and high authority among people.

Thanks to your zeal and care, the Church today successfully carries out her mission in such spheres as theological education, missionary work, charity and social ministry, restores churches and monasteries destroyed in the past, and builds the new ones that attract numerous pilgrims and parishioners who lift up their prayers for the Church of Christ and for the countries and peoples united by the Orthodox faith.

During your frequent pastoral visits to various dioceses, you not only celebrate the divine services, but also visit educational institutions, hospitals, orphanages, meet with local authorities, servicemen, scientists and scholars, workers of culture, businessmen, public figures and the youth.

The progress in all areas of church ministry performed under your Patriarchal guidance is a clear sigh of spiritual revival that has multiplied the glory of our Holy Church, whose helmsman God ordained you to be. Uncountable are the deeds that have already been inscribed in golden letters into the chronicle of church life today.

Having the steadfast trust in the mercy of the Creator and in the intercession of the Heavenly Queen, you have been carrying for almost eight years a hard Patriarchal cross laid upon you by Christ the Chief Shepherd. God alone knows how hard are the Primate's labours, what wisdom and strength and concentration of mind and will this ministry requires, what pain fills the heart of the Patriarch who assumes the responsibility for the whole Church *that the Lord has gained by His precious blood*. At the same time we know that for you, just like for the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian, there is *no greater joy than to hear that your children walk in truth* (3 Jn 1:4).

You are the successor of the holy hierarchs of Kiev and Moscow, following with diligence and patience in the footsteps of these zealots of Orthodoxy, champions of faith, of those continuing the missionary work of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius the Enlighteners of the Slavs, and of the holy Grand Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles, the Baptizer of Russia. May the Almighty God help you by their prayers to overcome the craft designs of the enemy and consolidate Orthodoxy in the whole canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Your life entirely devoted to the Holy Church inspires us, your humble obedient brothers in prayer and

faithful children, to follow as best as we can the example of our First Hierarch. In your paternal exhortations we find strength to continue our conciliar work, each performing our ministry according to the Lord's dispensation. We assure you of our unchanging willingness to work zealously under your Patriarchal guidance to the glory of God and for the benefit of our Mother-Church.

On this memorable day, we wish to Your Holiness inexhaustible strength, spiritual joy and God's generous help in your further lofty and important service as Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Grateful to carry out our ministry under your Primatial omophorion, we now *with one mouth and one heart* proclaim together – Many Years to the Most Holy Vladyka!

20 November 2016

Members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/49003/