Patriarch Kirill's address after the liturgy at the diocese of Sourozh's newly consecrated Cathedral of the Dormition

On October 16, 2016, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who is on a pastoral visit to the diocese of Sourozh for the 300th anniversary of the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church in the British Islands, presided over the consecration of the Cathedral of the Dormition in London and the Divine Liturgy in the newly consecrated church. After the liturgy the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed those present in the Cathedral of the Dormition:

"Your Eminences, and Graces, dear Bishop Yelisei, Your Grace Justin Welby, archbishop of Canterbury, Your Highness Prince Michael of Kent, high representatives of the Catholic, Armenian and Coptic Churches, dear brothers and sisters,

I extend my heartfelt greetings to you all on this historic occasion in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church in the British Isles. We are celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of the presence of Russian Orthodox people in Great Britain. And we are celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of our community in this holy church, once kindly put at our disposal by the Church of England, and then acquired on the means of her parishioners. This is a great event and, going back in time, I can testify to the great path this community has trod.

The first time I crossed the threshold of this church was in 1969. I don't know whether there is anyone here today present who attended this church back then. I recall that there was quite a small group of people united by their Orthodox faith and guided by their spiritual father and leader the ever-memorable Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom), who did much to establish this community.

And now we testify with thanks to God that the Russian Orthodox presence has grown significantly. This might be explained by the number of Russians, Ukrainian and Byelorussians who today live in Great Britain. But the growth of Russian speakers in Great Britain does not at all determine parish growth. The growth of the Orthodox community testifies to the strengthening of the Orthodox faith in the hearts of our people. What we see today in London we can see especially clearly in Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia.

In living for many years under atheism, our people, freedom from this dominance, have felt an acute need for spiritual sources in their lives. And we know that over the past twenty five years something has happened unknown in world history. Over the past twenty five years tens of thousands of Orthodox

churches and parishes have been established, hundreds of monasteries, dozens of theological schools of learning. What was once impossible to imagine has happened.

These changes are impossible to explain merely through missionary endeavours, although they have been important. This miracle of the revival of faith in our secular age can only be explained by the power of God, the power of divine grace. And we can connect the presence of this grace to the spiritual heroism of the New Martyrs and Confessors, tens and hundreds of thousands of home adorned the heavenly vaults of the holy Christian martyrs. It is through their prayers and intercession before the face of God that Orthodox Rus has undergone a revival. And today, as we celebrate this remarkable event - the three hundredth anniversary of the presence of Russian Orthodox people in Great Britain, we give thanks to God for that we had to live through. We give thanks him for afflictions and joys, we give thanks to him for the unique experience of the spiritual life of our people which allows us today to turn to God and call upon him thus: "Lord, save us and have mercy upon us! Lord, help us in our life!" Today we are strong and enjoy many things, we educated and have a high level of culture. In spite of difficulties our economy is developing apace. But we know that true success comes when human endeavours are joined to divine aid. And today, thanks be to God, most of our people understand this. We look to the future with hope and believe that through the prayers of the New Martyrs and our own prayers the Lord will not forsake.

The Church has special importance for peoples' spiritual lives. She unites people, transcending national, social, property and political confines. By her nature the Church cannot align herself with either the right or the left or the centre. She cannot be with the wealthy against the poor, or the poor against the wealthy. She cannot be with representatives of one nationality against another. The Church is the community which is open to the world. And all human contradictions are erased in this community. And even very wealthy people stand alongside the poor and the highly-placed alongside the simple as a sign that within the Church these differences and contradictions are swept aside.

The Church is called upon to play the same role in international relations too. It is through faith, through religion, through the Church that a nation's soul is revealed. And at very deep level the Church represents her people to the outer world. I believe that here in Great Britain, many have discovered for themselves both Russia and Orthodoxy through this community, in the same way as we, in coming into contact with the religious life of the British, can better understand both the people and country. At the spiritual and cultural level a particularly special mutual inter-action takes place between countries and peoples. This inter-action cannot be swayed by the selfish political concerns of the age. This has been well demonstrated by the three hundred year history of the life of the Russian Church in Great Britain. There have been times when the relationship between our countries has been excellent. We have been together in combating a common enemy. But there have been times when this relationship has deteriorated and diplomatic relations have been broken off. Yet in London there has been a Russian

Orthodox Church for three hundred years. And no ups and downs of external political struggles and selfish considerations have ever stopped people from coming together to pray to God and have ever prevented people seeing in their British brothers and sisters true brothers and sisters united by faith in the Lord and the Saviour.

I believe firmly that this mission as peacemaker of the Church has great meaning today. We, people of faith, are given to see that which people who have no faith cannot see. We can detach ourselves somewhat from the ups and downs, from present-day conflicts and look from a distance at what is happening, including in Russian-British relations. And this view will differ greatly from the views of politicians.

For we are two nations who are joined together by historical, religious and even monarchical ties, we are two nations who know each other and respect each other to a significant degree. May God grant that this potential be developed for a better future in the relationship between our countries and peoples.

I would like once more to return to the history of the parish. The rectors of the Russian communities were remarkable ministers - archpriest Yakov Smirnov, archpriest Yevgeny Popov, archpriest Vasily Popov, who before the Russian Revolution and immediately afterwards did much to strengthen the Russian Orthodox community in London. When at the beginning of the eighteenth century diplomatic relations between the two countries were broke off, the rector of our church here in London carried out a state and diplomatic mission. And this would happen every time when relations between the two countries became difficult. The Churches of Russia and Britain were the bridge which united our two peoples. I would like once more to recall the ever-memorable late Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom). He did a great deal to gather this community and to make Russian Orthodoxy accessible to the people of the British Isles. And he did a great deal for the development of relations between the Russian Church and the Anglican Church. In remembering today our forefathers and predecessors, we give thanks to God for their lives and their endeavours.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Bishop Yelisei, Bishop Mark and our clergy who labour in Great Britain. I would like to thank all who have laboured to restore the Dormition Cathedral. Through your sacrifices and labours you have much to maintain thus church and community May God's blessing be upon all the Russian Orthodox parishes of Great Britain, and especially upon the Dormition Cathedral in London. In memory of today's occasion I would like to present to you this old icon of the Most Holy Mother of God. As you venerate it, I would ask you to pray for our Church and our country, and as it has already been said that it is gift from the Patriarch, to pray also for your Patriarch.

I would also like to thank Bishop Yelisei for his labours and present as a gift to you a cross and panagia which were made on the occasion of the thousandth anniversary of the demise of St. Vladimir, Equal-to-

the-Apostles. And to all those present here today, I would like to hand over this icon of all the saints of Britain. Britain has main saints of God, many of whom belonged to the ancient Undivided Church. Their names are venerated in Russian and in other countries where the Russian Church has a canonical presence no less than in Great Britain. It is these saints that bind us more firmly than any human ties. They are our common heritage, our common history, they are the embodiment of our common values. And I believe that this is the foundation of a good common future.

May God save the Queen and Great Britain, may the Lord preserve the Land of Russia. And let us glorify the Lord in our hearts and bodies. I would like to give to each of this little icon with a Patriarchal blessing."

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Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/49106/