



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Message of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to Primates and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches who have assembled in Crete

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia has sent a message to the Primates and representative of Local Orthodox Churches who have assembled in the Island of Crete. Below is the full text of the message.

To His Holiness Bartholomew

Archbishop of Constantinople – the New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

To their Holinesses and Beatitudes the Primates of Holy Churches of God

To archpastors, pastors, monastics and laity who have assembled on the Island of Crete

Your Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew,

Your Holinesses and Beatitudes,

The Most Reverend Fellow-Archpastors,

The Honorable Representatives of Local Orthodox Churches:

I cordially greet you on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church and on behalf of the Orthodox faithful in Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldova and other countries, who comprise the vast flock of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Brothers, we all are the one Body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27). We have received the priceless gift of unity from the Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself. To preserve this gift is one of our principal tasks; it is a direct commandment of our Saviour' (Jn. 17:21).

Let us not be confused by the fact that the opinions of Sister-Churches about the convocation of the Holy and Great Council have been divided. According to St. Paul, *there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized* (1 Cor. 11:19). In the days of preparations for the Council, such differences have become fully revealed, but we must not allow them to weaken the God-commanded unity, to grow into an inter-church conflict, to bring division and trouble into our ranks. We remain one Orthodox family and together we all bear responsibility for the fate of Holy Orthodoxy.

It is my profound conviction that the Churches, both those who have decided to go to Crete and those who have refrained from it, made their decisions in good conscience, and for this reason we must respect the position of each of them.

The Russian Orthodox Church has always proceeded from the conviction that the voice of any Local Church, be it large or small, old or new, should not be neglected. The absence of the Church of Antioch's consent to convene the Council means that we have not reached pan-Orthodox consensus. We cannot ignore the voices of the Georgian, Serbian and Bulgarian Churches either, who have spoken for a postponement of the Council to a later date.

I trust that if there is a good will, the meeting in Crete can become an important step towards overcoming the present differences. It can make its own contribution to the preparation of that Holy and Great Council which will unite all the Local Autocephalous Churches without exception and become a visible reflection of the unity of the Holy Orthodox Church of Christ, for which our predecessors, who blissfully passed away, prayed and which they expected.

We assure you that our prayers will be with you in the days of the work ahead of you.

With great love in Christ,

+ KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

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