Patriarch Kirill's homily after the service at the Holy Trinity church in Antarctica

On February 17, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia visited the Bellingshausen Station on Waterloo Island in Antarctica to celebrate a thanksgiving with the blessing of water and the office for the dead polar explorers at the Holy Trinity church, the only stationary church in Antarctica. After the service, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed the congregation with a homily:

Your Eminences and Graces! Dear Brothers and Sister!

We have prayed with a special feeling here, in Antarctica, for the living and for the dead – for the living who work under hard conditions risking their lives every day, but also for all those who died here, sometimes in tragic situations. The exploration of Antarctica is a work involving high risks, and we have commemorated today all those who passed away here fulfilling their duty.

There are places in the world where you don't have to say or explain anything, where there is a certain heightened spiritual wattage felt especially strongly during a prayer. Here is such a place. Perhaps it is because people here have to work in very severe conditions or perhaps the matter is when coming to this church, they prayer especially sincerely, with strong faith. I am happy that a church has been built here for people to pray and stay one-on-one with God.

We have blessed water. We believe that through the feat of the Lord and Saviour and through His death on the cross and through His Resurrection the human race has received divine energy, the grace of the Holy Spirit. When we bless water we attract this divine energy. At the same time the water does not lose either its chemical formula or its physical properties, remaining water, but divine energy penetrates through it as we sprinkles ourselves with it and as drink it we come to be charged with this energy.

Holy water is an example of union of things physical and earthly with things divine. However, the union of the divine and the human also takes place in the life of every person. And if it does not happen, if there is no composition of divine and human powers, then you suffer too and your efforts turn out abortive. Man should walk his part of the way in this co-work of God and man. It is when we study to master a profession and when we work hard that we cover our own part of the way.

However, our human knowledge and resources are not sufficient always and in all situations. Sometimes something strange seems to have suddenly happened in our life. Sometimes it happens when we go through an extreme situation and if we survive safe and sound we often say that we have been lucky. The word ‘lucky’ has no rational meaning, since it is impossible to give a rational description of the situation covered by this word. Yes, perhaps there are no such accidents at all but in reality it is the very ‘clearance’ in our life into which God enters. He gives us the freedom to work, to study, to do all that we are able to do. But sometimes we have to go through such life situations that we are unable to achieve the necessary result or even to save our life. Then only one thing remains; it is to pray to God, but how often we come out of these crises saying ‘we were lucky’! No, we were not because it was God Who helped us!

That is why we are with you today, so that we could pray for you all, Russians, Chileans – all those who work here, in Antarctica, so that in the moment when you cannot determine your future God may be with you. And you, on your part, keep the faith in your heart and pray as often as possible. Then you will see from your own experience that the heaven responds to you. If it had not, nobody would have turned to it. In fact, it is difficult to deceive us, for we turn to heaven precisely because we know it will respond.

I wish God’s help, good health, successful mission to you all who are present here and through you to all those who work in Antarctica. In memory of our visit I would like to present our church with an image of St Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles, Baptizer of Russia, the millennium of whose repose we marked last year, and shrouds for the Eucharistic vessels.

My special word goes to you, brothers, who are on the spiritual watch here. May God help you in your work. Never lose heart and remember that you are on the summit of the planet. When I blessed water today, I thought about the whole globe below us and prayed for God’s creation. So, you too pray for your loved ones, for all who work here, for your country, your people and for the whole world.

Patriarchal Press Service

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