



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Department for External Church Relations

Primates of Russian Orthodox Church and Orthodox Church in America celebrate liturgy at Kremlin Cathedral of the Assumption

On December 6, the Day of the Entry of Our Lady to the Temple and the 97th anniversary of the enthronement of St. Tikhon, Patriarch of All Russia, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Assumption in the Moscow Kremlin.

The two Primates were assisted by a great assembly of bishops and priests from the both Churches.

Traditionally for the Day of the Entry of Our Lady to the Temple, the service was attended by representatives of the Peter the Great Military Academy of Strategic Missile Forces which celebrates on this day the anniversary of its foundation.

After the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church lifted up a prayer for peace in Ukraine.

After the Liturgy, Patriarch Kirill addressed the congregation. He greeted Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada and presented His Beatitude with a cross and a pectoral icon.

In his response, Metropolitan Tikhon said in particular,

‘It is with profound joy and brotherly love that I greet Your Holiness on this Feast of the Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple. Our concelebration today gives expression to our unity in faith and love, and therefore witnesses to the Eucharistic unity of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church in America.

‘By standing together before the Holy Altar, we bring to God both Russia and America, just as my patron saint and your predecessor, St Tikhon, whose enthronement we commemorate today, united our two lands by his apostolic labors as Enlightener of North America and his martyric witness as Patriarch of Moscow.

‘The Orthodox Church in America has received many gifts from the Church of Russia. The first Russian Orthodox missionaries came to Alaska two hundred and twenty years ago from Valaam Monastery, planting the seeds of the Orthodox faith in North America. The Monk Herman, a member of that missionary group, by his humility, faithfulness and love became the first Orthodox saint in the New World, being canonized by the Orthodox Church in America in 1970.

‘The great missionary of the 19th century, Innokenty (Veniaminov), began his priestly service in Alaska, multiplied his talents as a missionary both in Alaska and Siberia, and ended his life as Metropolitan of Moscow. St. Innokenty was canonized in 1977 by the Church of Russia at the request of the Orthodox Church in America.

St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow, served as archbishop of the Orthodox mission in North America at the beginning of the 20th century, guiding the mission in its growth across the United States and Canada, and foreseeing the future of the mission in an autocephalous Orthodox Church in America.

‘In 1970 the Church of Russia granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in America, fulfilling the prediction of St. Tikhon. By this action of the Russian Orthodox Church the young Orthodox Church in America became a sister church.

‘The history we have briefly described includes much suffering and many troubles, as well as many joys

and achievements. The 20th century was a time of persecution for the Church of Russia, with many martyrs and confessors bearing witness to Christ.

‘At the end of the last century a time of renewal and rebirth began for the Church of Russia. Today we see the Russian Orthodox Church doing its missionary work in Russian society, preaching the Word of God and serving the people in works of charity in the name of Christ.

‘For the Orthodox Church in America the 20th Century was also a time of trials and tribulations. The Russian Revolution and the persecution of the Church in Russia was reflected in church life in America. For decades normal communication between Russia and America was not possible. The Church in America gained in strength and awareness of its mission and identity.

‘Today, the Orthodox Church in America has seen fruits of missionary growth in the number of missions and parishes, monasteries and theological schools, programs of Orthodox education for children and young people, and the publication of scholarly and popular works of theology.

‘Our historical and spiritual connection to the Church of Russia is very real, yet the diversity of the Orthodox Church in America connects us with the Orthodox Christians in Romania and Albania, in Poland and the Czech Lands and Slovakia, in Bulgaria and Ukraine, in the Churches of Antioch and Jerusalem and Greece.

Your Holiness, this Liturgy today is a feast of faith, a feast of joy and a feast of love. We feel the presence of St. Innokenty and St. Tikhon. Above all, we thank God for His abundant love and mercy. As an expression of thanks for the hospitality that Your Holiness has shown to me and to our delegation from the Orthodox Church in America, I would like to present you with this copy of the Sitka Icon of the Mother of God. The original was a gift in 1850 from the Russian American Company to the Cathedral of the Archangel Michael in Sitka, Alaska, where it resides today as a comfort to the faithful of Alaska and all of North America. May she also be a blessing for you and for all the bishops, clergy and faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church’.

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