Metropolitan Hilarion's greetings to Russian Monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mount Athos on the day of its patron saint

In his message to the abbot of the Russian Monastery of St. Penteleimon on Holy Mount Athos, Archimandrite Jeremiah, the head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, greets him, the brethren and numerous pilgrims on the occasion of the commemoration day of the Holy Protomartyr Panteleimon, the patron saint of the monastery. Below is the full text of the message:

Very Reverend and Dear in the Lord Father Jeremiah,

I greet you and all the brethren in Christ and numerous pilgrims on the occasion of your holy monastery's feast – the commemoration day of the Holy Protomartyr Panteleimon.

Glorifying holy martyrs, the Church of Christ praises their courage and unshakable confidence in the final victory of Christ. The fearlessness of martyrs in face of suffering and deaths was one of the most effective testimonies that helped to convert heathens to Christianity.

Orthodox monasticism, this bloodless martyrdom, reveals the same models of courage and faithfulness to God which makes it possible for monks to echo the Apostle: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?* (Rom. 8:35). Just as martyrs, venerable ascetics continue through their life the cause of proclaiming the gospel of Christ. Withdrawing from the world, they become the light of the world (Mt. 5:14) and prevailing over human nature, they show to humanity the way of beneficial transformation.

For over ten centuries now, Holy Mount Athos represents a unique monastic way of life marked by God's special grace and defended by the Protecting Veil of the Most Holy Mother of God. The inhabitants of its monasteries come from all parts of the world. The chosen faithful of the Russian Church used to flock to Mount Athos for centuries to become its inhabitants, drawing from the treasury of the Athonite monastic tradition and dedicating themselves to the full to monastic feats. It was through them that the teaching of inner prayer reached Holy Rus' as well, forming the Orthodox people for the ideals of holiness and enlightenment of the spirit.

On the day of the monastery's patron saint, I prayerfully wish that all the brethren may be worthy successors of the great Athonite tradition, and to you, Dear Father Archimandrite, I wish physical strength for the continuation of your spiritual guidance of the brethren entrusted by God to our care.

With love in the Lord,

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk

Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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