Patriarch Kirill: the Church has always been a guarantee of peace and unity of the Russian and Ukrainian people

On March 14, 2014, the Friday of the second week of Lent, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at the cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. Addressing the congregation after the service, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church dwelt on the situation that has developed as a result of the political crisis in Ukraine:

“Today all my thoughts are there, in Ukraine, among our faithful who are going through grave trials. For more than 400 years, attempts have been made to split and divide the Russian World. When we say ‘Russian’ it should not be interpreted in the way our ill-wishers do when they speak of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. We speak of the Russian world; we speak of the great Russian civilization that come out of the Kiev baptismal font to spread through the vast lands of Eurasia. It is this distinctive civilization based on Orthodoxy and the moral values of Orthodoxy that over 400 years has given no rest to those who sees in this peaceful civilization a challenge to their own ideological attitudes. And we know that whenever our Fatherland was attacked by enemies the main thing they wanted to do was to divide our people and especially to tear southern and western Russian lands from the one world.

Today there are independent states that exist in the expanses of this world, and we respect their sovereignty, their readiness and willingness to build their national life on their own. But it does not mean that the desire of lawful sovereignty and its realisation should be accompanied by destruction of the one common spiritual space. And today we pray that there may be no military clashes between the brothers, that once the people of the same faith and blood may not bring death and destruction to each other.

Therefore the principal prayer I say today is a prayer for peace in Ukraine, for peace in relations between the brothers who live both in Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Our united Church has always been a guarantee of this peace and unity, and God grant that she may not be destroyed by external political forces.

I would like to say with a special joy that all the Orthodox Patriarchs, all the primates of Orthodox Churches have unanimously stated that there can be no other solution of the Ukrainian problem than a peaceful solution. There must be no attempt to use force, be it political or physical, to seize churches and monasteries. And there is no way of overcoming the schism other than bringing schismatics back to the fold of one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. All the heads of Churches signed this off; no one

challenged it; no one made any other proposals, and this signal must be heard everywhere today, both in Russia and Ukraine and throughout the world.

We welcome the readiness of our Church to enter into negotiations with those who have been in division on the basis of the principles which have been formulated by the Synaxis of heads of autocephalous Orthodox Churches. And I very much hope that this common Orthodox position will be respected and no one will oppose the voice of universal Orthodoxy".

Patriarchal Press Service

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