THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Christmas Message of His Holiness Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia

Beloved in the Lord Your Graces the archpastors, all-honourable presbyters and deacons,

God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!

Today our churches are filled with people who have come to glorify the newly-born Divine Infant Jesus Christ and his Most Pure Mother the Virgin Mary.

The Nativity of Christ is the central event in all human history. The human person has always sought out God, yet God has revealed himself to humanity in his fullness only in the incarnation of his Only-begotten Son. With the coming of the Son of God and the Son of Man the world has discovered that God is Love and not merely a Higher Power, that God is Mercy and not merely the Dispenser of justice, that God is the source of life and joy and not only a dread Judge, that God is the Holy Trinity, the inner law of which is also love, and far from the solitary Master of the world.

And today we celebrate an event which at its root has changed the entire course of human history. God enters the very depths of human life, he becomes one of us, he takes upon himself the weight of our sins, human infirmities and weaknesses - he brings them to Golgotha in order to free people from this unbearable burden. God henceforth is no longer to be found somewhere in the unattainable heavens, but is here, with us, among us. Each time that the Divine Liturgy is celebrated we hear the words 'Christ is among us!' and the reply 'He is, and shall be!' This is clear testimony to the presence of the Incarnate God - Christ the Saviour - among his faithful. In partaking regularly of his holy Body and Blood, in striving to fulfill his commandments, we enter into a real communion with him, with our Saviour, and we receive forgiveness for our sins.

Believers in Christ and his faithful disciples are called upon to be witnesses to the Kingdom of God which has been revealed in his earthly life. A great honour has been bestowed upon us - to act in this world as our Teacher and God acted, through the power of Christ to be steadfast in resisting sin and evil, never to weaken in the assiduous accomplishment of good deeds, never to be despondent in our daily endeavour to transform our sinful nature into a new person of grace.

Christ the Saviour has set an unshakeable, absolute criterion for a genuine relationship with God: it is our neighbour. In taking upon ourselves others' infirmities, in sharing pain and affliction, in being compassionate to the unfortunate and downcast, we fulfil the law of Christ (Gal 6:2) and are likened to

the Saviour who has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases (Is 53:4).

And it is impossible on this joyous and light-bearing day of Christ's Nativity, when all of creation bows down in amazement before the manger of the Divine Infant, to forget about others. The great grace which we today receive in our churches is to be poured out abundantly also upon those who are beyond the confines of the Church and who live after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Col 2:8). Yet if we do not encounter Christ together, then this Good News may not reach these people; if we do not open up our hearts so that we may share the joy that has filled us, then this joy may never touch those who do not have it but who are ready to receive it.

The incarnation of the Son of God has elevated human nature to an unsurpassed height. Each one of us is not only created 'according to the image and likeness of God' but also through Christ has been adopted by God: we are no more 'strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God' (Eph 2:19). This proximity and boldness towards God is spoken of in the Lord's Prayer in which we turn to God as Creator and our heavenly Father.

All human life is precious, for it has been purchased by the Incarnation, Life, Death and Resurrection of the Only-begotten Son of God. All of this compels us to relate with special reverence and attention to every person, no matter how different he or she may be from us. According to Metropolitan Philaret (Drozdov), 'love is the living and active participation in another person's well being. ‘It is to this active love that I would like to call all of us during these joyous days of the Nativity: to be, as St. Paul says, 'love one another in mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord' (Rom 12:10-11; Heb 13:16).

I offer you my heartfelt congratulations on the great feast of the Nativity of Christ. May the God of peace and love (2 Cor 13:11) grant to our people and each one of us peace and prosperity in the New Year.

+ KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

The Nativity of Christ

Moscow

2013 / 2014

Patriarchal message is also available in other languages:

Рождественское послание Патриарха Московского и всея Руси КИРИЛЛА архипастырям, пастырям, монашествующим и всем верным чадам Русской Православной Церкви (Russian)

Москва уонна бүтүн Русь Патриарха КИРИЛЛ Таҥара үрдүкү үлэһиттэригэр, аҕабыыттарга, диаконнарга, манаахтарга уонна Нуучча Православнай Таҥаратын Дьиэтин бары эрэллээх оҕолоругар Ороһуоспанан эҕэрдэ суруга (Yakut)

Ражджэственскае пасланне Патрыярха Маскоўскага і ўсяе Русі КІРЫЛА архіпастырам, пастырам, манахам і ўсім верным дзецям Рускай Праваслаўнай Царквы (Byelorussian)

Різдвяне послання Патріарха Московського і всієї Русі КИРИЛА архіпастирям, пастирям, ченцям і всім вірним чадам Руської Православної Церкви (Ukrainian)

Pastorală la Naşterea Domnului a Sanctităţii Sale KIRIL, Patriarhul Moscovei şi al Întregii Rusii Arhipăstorilor, păstorilor, cinului monahal şi tuturor dreptmăritorilor credincioşi ai Bisericii Ortodoxe Ruse (Moldavian)

Moskva ja kogu Venemaa patriarhi KIRILLUSE Jõululäkitus ülemhingekarjastele, preestritele, mungaelupidajatele ja kõigile Vene Õigeusu Kiriku ustavatele lastele (Estonian)

MASKVOS IR VISOS RUSIOS PATRIARCHO KIRILO KALĖDINIS LAIŠKAS VYSKUPAMS, KUNIGAMS, DIAKONAMS, VIENUOLIAMS IR VISIEMS IŠTIKIMIESIEMS RUSŲ ORTODOKSŲ BAŽNYČIOS TIKINTIESIEMS (Lithuanian)

Maskavas un visas Krievzemes Patriarha KIRILA Kristus Piedzimšanas svētku vēstījums virsganiem, draudžu ganiem, diakoniem, mūku kārtai un visiem uzticamajiem Krievzemes Pareizticīgās Baznīcas bērniem (Latvian)

Мәскеу және бүкіл Русь патриархы Кириллдың архипастырьларға, пастырьларға, монахтарға және Орыс Православие Шіркеуінің барлық берілген ұл-қыздарына Рождестволық жолдауы (Kazakh)

Москва жана бүткүл Орус Патриархы КИРИЛЛДИН Архипастырларга, пастырларга, диакондорго, кечилдик кылуучуларга жана Орус Православ Чиркөөсүнүн бардык ишенимдүү балдарына РОЖДЕСТВОДОГУ КАЙРЫЛУУСУ (Kirghiz)

Паёми мавлудии Патриархи Маскав ва тамоми Рус КИРИЛЛ ба кашишњои аъзам,

кашишњо, порсоён ва њамаи фарзандони боимони Калисои Православии Рус (Tajik)

Москва ва бутун Рус Патриархи КИРИЛЛнинг бош руҳонийлар, руҳонийлар, роҳиблар ҳамда Рус Православ Черковининг барча содиқ фарзандларига РОЖДЕСТВО МАКТУБИ (Uzbek)

Moskwanyň we bütin Russiýanyň Patriarhy KIRILLIŇ Rus Prawoslaw buthanasynyň arhipastyrlaryna, pastyrlaryna, diakonlaryna, monahlara we ähli dindar adamlara “Rož, mynasybetli ýüzlenmesi (Turkmen)

Message de Noël du Patriarche Cyrille de Moscou et de toute la Russie aux archipasteurs, pasteurs, diacres, moines et moniales et à tous les fidèles de l’Église orthodoxe russe (French)

Μήνυμα Χριστουγέννων του Πατριάρχου Μόσχας και Πασών των Ρωσιών Κυρίλλου προς τους αρχιερείς, ιερείς, διακόνους, μονάζοντας και όλα τα πιστά τέκνα της Ορθοδόξου Εκκλησίας της Ρωσίας (Greek)

Messaggio di Natale di Sua Santità Kirill, Patriarca di Mosca e di tutte le Russie (Italian)

Mensaje de Navidad del Patriarca KIRIL de Moscú y toda Rusia a los obispos, pastores, diáconos, monjes y monjas y a todos fieles de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa (Spanish)

□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□□ (Chinese)

**□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□