Primates and Hierarchs of Local Orthodox Churches celebrate Liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on the commemoration day of St Olga Equal-to-the-Apostles

On 24 July 2013, the commemoration day of St Princess Olga the Equal-to-the-Apostles, Primates and hierarchs of all Local Orthodox Churches celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

Celebrating the Liturgy were His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa; His Beatitude Patriarch Theofilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and All Palestine; His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia; His Holiness and Beatitude Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II of All Georgia; His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia; His Holiness Patriarch Neophyte of Bulgaria; His Beatitude Archbishop Chrysostomos II of New Justiniana and All Cyprus; His Beatitude Metropolitan Sava of Warsaw and All Poland; and His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon of All America and Canada, – who are visiting the Russian Orthodox Church on the occasion of the celebration marking the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.

Concelebrating with the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches were Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, head of the delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople; Metropolitan Antonio of Mexico, Venezuela, Central America and the Caribbean, head of the delegation of the Patriarchate of Antioch; Metropolitan Iosif of Western and Sourthern Europe, head of the delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church; Metropolitan Prokopios of Philippe, Neapolis and Thasos, head of the Secretariat for Inter-Orthodox Relations of the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church and head of the delegation of the Greek Orthodox Church; Metropolitan John of Korça, head of the delegation of the Albanian Orthodox Church; Archbishop Rostislav of Prešov, head of the delegation of the Orthodox Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia; members of the Holy Synod and assembly of hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church; members of the delegation of the Local Orthodox Churches; head of Synodal Departments; monasteries' abbots and clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Among those praying at the Liturgy were Mr. Alexander Beglov, Presidential Envoy for Central Russia; Mr. Kostyantyn Hryshchenko, deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine; Mr. Anderi Vorobiov, acting Governor of the Moscow Region; Mr. Igor Schyogolev, assistant to the Russian President; Mr. Vladimir Yakunin, President of JSC "Russian Railways" and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the St Andrew the First-

Called Foundation; Mr. Vladimir Legoyda, chairman of the Synodal Information Department; Mr. Yevgeniy Parkhaev, director of the 'Sofrino' Artistic Production Enterprise; Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio to the Russian Federation; and Ambassadors of the Slavic countries.

After the Liturgy, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church said a thanksgiving commemorating St Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles and the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.

Then His Holiness Patriarch Kirill read out the Message to Archpastors, Priests, Monastics and the Laity on the Occasion of the 1025th Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus.

Mr. Alexander Beglov, Presidential Envoy for Central Russia, greeted all those present on behalf of the Russian President.

His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria and All Africa addressed all those present on behalf of the Primates and delegations of the Local Orthodox Churches, saying:

"Your Holiness and Beatitude Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia,

Beloved in Christ Brother and Concelebrant:

In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says, 'You, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree' (Rom 11:17).

Today, by the grace of Almighty God, we, primates and representatives of local autocephalous Orthodox Churches from all over the world, are rejoicing at the opportunity to be with you here in the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow and as members of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church we are celebrating the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia – an event decisive in the history Christian mission. We remember and celebrate the grafting of the Russian people onto the one Body of Christ which is the Church.

The dream about the Christian Europe realized in making the Russian people participants in the reality centered on Crucified and Risen Christ, Who is always present in the Eucharistic life of the Church, made Russian people partakers of the inexhaustible source of patristic tradition. Such Christian values as patience, generosity and self-sacrifice became ever since the qualities inherent in the Russian soul and a guarantee of the unity of the Russian society.

Adopted and assimilated, the love and zeal for the faith in Christ brought Russian people in contact with the Byzantine cultural phenomenon. It manifested itself in all the forms of Russian culture and sped up

the Russian people's movement toward the formation of their national consciousness. As a result, the name 'Russian' began to be applied to the state, its citizens and the religion they confessed.

In addition, it helped them to define their national, civic and religious identity and to strengthen the feeling of their common belonging to a society which began its historical journey with renewal through the holy baptism in the waters of the Dnieper. Following the true path of Orthodoxy both in theory and practice, the Russian people remained united even at the times of devastating invasions from outside or severe persecution inside.

The Russian Church, which had her rise in the Baptism in 988, became through centuries a bright beacon providing spiritual and moral guidelines. Nevertheless, the authority of any institution is measured not only by the trace it left in history when it was flourishing. What is more important is the patience and firmness it showed in preserving its tradition intact in severe conditions.

And just as oaks which become stronger standing against winds and diamonds which are formed under the weight of the deep soil, so the Russian Church matured going through troubles and groaning on her path of the cross. She produced a great assembly of saints, enlighteners, venerable fathers, fools for Christ's sake and confessors, who have adorned the bright sky of the catholic Church and clearly testified that 'faith is dead without works, just as works without faith, for faith is tested by works' (John of Damascus, Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, 82, 60-62).

Your Holiness, the fact that the over millennium-long historical depth and striking solidity of the spiritual bond between Orthodoxy and the Russian people, even in the times when this bond was challenged, eloquently and indisputably show that the baptism of the Russian people was an historic event not only transcending the laws of history but also changing them.

It is our duty to pay tribute today to the memory and show our respect for the Saints who brought Russian people to the font of eternal life. According to Aristotle, courage is the first among human virtues, since it guarantees the acquisition of the rest; and it was through courage and daring, her personal example and salvific message on her lips that St. Olga Equal-to-the-Apostles Enlightener of the Russian Church became the ardent missionary of the Russian people. To her we reverently cry out: Rejoice, for you have revealed God to the Russians'.

With no less reverence do we honour St. Vladimir equal-to-the apostles enlightener of the Russian people who was given the spirit of sonship after he miraculously received a divine sign. Showing rare sensitivity and insight, like those shown by the great man of Christianity Constantine, he made a reverential decision decisive for the historical journey of the Russian people when he chose the true faith and common filial adoption of the Triune God.

Celebrating the memory of these two great saints, we effectively express our confidence that the seed of salvation, which was dropped to the Russian land 1025 years ago, brought forth in the past and will continue bringing forth today rich and blessed fruits whose fragrance console the whole Orthodox world. In the spirit of respect, we mentally return to that moment in history, the turning point for the entire Orthodoxy, plunging again in the waters that launched the glorious historical journey of the most holy Russian Church and proclaiming that the faith verily remains alive and ‘working through love’ (Gal. 5:6).”

All worshippers venerated the Cross of St Andrew the First-Called Apostle.

After the Liturgy, a reception was given on the occasion of the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia. Invited to the reception were Primates and representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches, representatives of state authorities and public organizations, religious figures and diplomats.

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