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

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to the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and All the Faithful Children

of the Russian Orthodox Church

Your Eminences the archpastors, honourable fathers, God-loving monks and nuns, dear brothers and sisters!

Today the Holy Church radiantly and with joy glorifies the mystery of the birth from the Most Pure Virgin of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Creator, in loving his creation, ‘was manifest in the flesh’, ‘became man’ and ‘like as we are, yet without sin’ (see: 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:15). The Infant lay in a manger in Bethlehem. He did this in order to save the world from spiritual and moral decay, to liberate the human person from fear of death. The Maker lays before us the greatest gift of all: his divine love and the fullness of life. In Christ we can find hope that conquers fear, we can attain holiness and immortality.

He comes into our world torn apart by sin in order that, through his birth, life, sufferings, death on the cross and glorious resurrection, he may establish a new law, a new commandment – the commandment of love. ‘A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another’ (Jn 13:34). The Lord addressed these words to his disciples and through them to the whole world: to those who lived then, to those who live now and to those who will live after us, right until the end of time.

Each person is called upon to respond to this commandment through his own deeds. In the way that Christ showed to us true mercy and unbounded forgiveness towards our faults, so too we are to be merciful and forgiving towards people. We must care not only for our own and for our neighbours, although we are to care for them in the first instance (see: 1 Tim 5:8), not only for our friends and for those who think like us, but also for those who have yet to find oneness with God. We are called to

imitate the Saviour in love, to pray for those who oppress and despise us (see: Mt 5:44), to have always in our thoughts the good of our people, the homeland and the Church. Each of us, in accomplishing good works, can change for the better, if only to a small degree, the reality which surrounds us. It is only in this way that we can become stronger together, for lawlessness can never vanquish love as the darkness can never engulf the light of true life (see: Jn 1:5).

The history of our homeland knows many examples whereby our people has placed its hopes in God and has overcome tribulations, has emerged from the most difficult trials with dignity.

We have recalled many of these events in the past year. We celebrated the four-hundredth anniversary of the end of the Time of Troubles, culminating in the invaders being driven from Russia and the restoration of national unity. We marked too the two-hundredth anniversary of the Patriotic War of 1812 during which our forefathers rebuffed the invasion of the 'twelve nations' – the huge army gathered by Napoleon from all the ends of conquered Europe.

The year 2013 will be marked by the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' by the Holy and Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir. The acceptance of the Christian faith was the beginning of a new era in the life of our nation. The light of Christ's truth that once shone forth upon the blessed hills of Kiev today illumines the hearts of those who live in the countries of historical Rus', teaching us the way of accomplishing good works.

In summing up the past year we give thanks to God for his great and rich mercies and for the afflictions which he allowed us to endure. Throughout her entire history the Church has never known long periods of well-being: after times of peace and tranquility there have inevitably come times of discord and tribulations. Yet in all circumstances the Church has, in word and deed, proclaimed God's truth; she proclaims it today, testifying that a society built on the principles of gain, moral chaos, unlimited freedom, disdain for eternal truths and the rejection of authority is morally sick and threatened by many dangers.

I call upon all people to have that patience which is commanded to us by God and pray for the Mother Church, for the people of God and for our native land. Have in mind always the words of the apostles to the nations: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity' (1 Cor 16:13-14).

In expressing my heartfelt congratulations on today's feast, I prayerfully entreat for all of us from the Divine Infant Christ spiritual and bodily strength so that each of us through his personal example may testify to the world that our Lord and God who has now been born is love (see: 1 Jn 4:8). Amen.

+ KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA

The Nativity of Christ

Moscow

2012 / 2013

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)

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

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)

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, destwo” mynasybetli ýüzlenmesi (Turkmen)

Moskva və bütün Rusiyanın Patriarxı KİRİLİN baş keşişlərə, keşişlərə, dyakonlara, rahiblərə və Rus Pravoslav kilsəsinin bütün sadiq övladlarına ünvanladığı Milad bayramı münasibətilə müraciəti (Azerbaijani)

Weihnachtsbotschaft des Patriarchen von Moskau und der ganzen Rus' Kirill an die Oberhirten, Hirten, Diakone, Mönche und alle treuen Kinder der Russischen Orthodoxen Kirche (German)

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 KIRILL de Moscú y toda Rusia a los obispos, pastores, diáconos, monjes y monjas y a todos fieles de la Iglesia Ortodoxa Rusa (Spanish)

[illegible] (Arabic) [illegible]

[illegible] (Chinese)

[illegible] (Japanese)

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/53247/