THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Metropolitan Hilarion's message of condolences over the death of Patriarch Ignatius of Great Antioch and All the East

To: The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Antioch

Your Eminences,

Fellow-Archpastors Beloved in the Lord:

Deeply grieved to learn about the demise of His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV of Great Antioch and All the East, I would like to express to you my sincere condolences over the great bereavement that has befallen the fraternal Church of Antioch.

For many years His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius was a true father for many thousands of the faithful of the Patriarchate of Antioch who live today in all the inhabited continents, for in the years of his patriarchal office the Orthodox Church of Antioch has brought the preaching once initiated by Sts Peter and Paul in Damascus *even to the end of the earth* (Acts. 1:8).

Divine Providence is seen in that precisely such a man as His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius was at the helm of the Church of Antioch in a period of severe trials that befell her in the late 20th century and God's blessing in that His Beatitude steadfastly steered the church boat into a safe harbour through the perturbed sea of life.

The concern His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius showed for the prosperity of the old Throne of Antioch, for peace and wellbeing in the lands of Syria and Lebanon as well as throughout the Biblical region has gained His Beatitude honour and respect among the Christian public at large.

The deceased worked much to consolidate the unity of Orthodoxy. By his deeds for the glory of God His Beatitude has raised the authority of the Most Holy Church of Antioch in the Orthodox world. He was a faithful friend of the Russian Orthodox Church in which he is well known and loved. Therefore, mourning together with us today and praying for the repose of his soul are many hierarchs and lay people of the Moscow Patriarchate.

I remember with warmth and reverence the moments of my personal talks with His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius and witnessed on many occasions his truly biblical wisdom and erudition, high dignity and at the same time his heart's simplicity, generosity and love.

Sharing the grief of the Most Holy Church of Antioch over the demise of her Primate, I pray to All-Merciful God that He may give rest to the soul of the blissfully departed Patriarch Ignatius in the mansions of the righteous and make his memory eternal.

With brotherly love in the Lord,

+ Hilarion

Metropolitan of Volokolamsk

Chairman

Department for External Church Relations

Moscow Patriarchate

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