THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Primates of Russian and Polish Orthodox Churches celebrate Divine Liturgy on Mount Grabarka on the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord

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On 19 August 2012, on the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Convent of Ss Martha and Mary on Holy Mount Grabarka.

Concelebrating at the Liturgy were members of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church: Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat; Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Hegumen Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman; and hierarchs of the Polish Church: Archbishop Simon of Łódź and Poznań; Archbishop Jeremy of Wrocław and Szczecin; Archbishop Abel of Lublin and Chełm; Archbishop James of Białystok and Gdańsk; Bishop George of Siemiatycze.

Praying at the service were the mother superior and the sisters of the Convent of Ss Martha and Mary and tens of thousands of pilgrims who came to Mount Grabarka from all over Poland and abroad.

Among those who attended the celebrations were Bogdan Borusewicz, Marshal of the Polish Senate; Alexander Alekseyev, Russian Ambassador to Poland; Victor Gaisenok, Ambassador of Belarus to Poland; Metropolitan Jozef Michalik, President of the Polish Bishops' Conference; other representatives of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland; and Tadeusz Truskolaski, president of Białystok.

After the Liturgy, His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa addressed His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, saying in particular:

"Your Holiness, in spiritual joy of brotherly love in Jesus Christ, I greet Your Holiness and your retinue in this holy place greatly venerated not only by the Orthodox Church in Poland alone.

I express the joy of our Church over your visit to this place on the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord.

Christ transfigured Himself before His disciples on Mount Tabor for them to understand His glory and His death at the Cross so that they may begin preaching to the world that Christ is truly the Saviour.

Your Holiness, humanity faces many challenges today and is troubled by wars, divisions, terrorism, pathological phenomena, opposition to spiritual life, economic crisis, and negation of God and struggle with Him.

God's teaching, the teaching of Holy Fathers, and the Holy Tradition are beacons for humanity today. Jesus Christ and His teaching are not subject to changes. Jesus Christ is the same*yesterday and today and forever* (Heb. 13:8).

We, Orthodox people, have preserved the Holy Fathers' teaching on life. Orthodoxy is a kind of spiritual philosophy which enlightens the whole cosmos, starting with the human being as a microcosm.

Your Holiness, you and the great Russian Church play a special role in the Pan-Orthodox world, reacting to various problems of today.

We are joining your work for the sake of Holy Orthodoxy, setting all our hopes on God's wise Providence for His creation. All this requires our joint Orthodox witness according to the teaching of the Church that is not of this world. She offers us the fullness of life.

Your Holiness, your visit to our Church particularly fits in your work for the benefit of Orthodoxy. We thank you for this and once again greet Your Holiness in the Polish land. We thank you for coming, for your prayer in this holy place, and for your Patriarchal blessing."

The Primate of the Russian Church greeted His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa and hierarchs of the Russian and Polish Churches, representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, high-ranking officials, and all those who attended the liturgy. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greeted all those present on the occasion of the Transfiguration day and delivered a homily, saying in particular:

"For us in Poland, Mount Grabarka is like Mount Tabor. A large number of people come here to venerate this holy place and to feel its grace. There are no historical monuments here, no man-made masterpieces, everything is very simple, but still thousands and thousands of people from Poland and other countries come here because they feel in their hearts that God's grace is present in this place. And probably it is not accidental that the feast of the Transfiguration has become a day when so many pilgrims come to Mount Grabarka from all over Poland and abroad.

If the world is transfigured by God's grace through man, what does it mean for us, followers of the Lord

and Saviour? It means that our vocation is to contribute to the work of God's grace in His creation. That is why a Christian can not limit the manifestation of his faith to his personal or family life. He can not confess his faith living in a ghetto. Only if they have an opportunity to motivate their deeds in personal, family, or public life by Christian beliefs, the faithful can participate in transfiguring the world around them through God's grace.

We know the example of the Tower of Babel, we know what it is like to build something without Christ. People in Poland, in Russia, and in the former Soviet Union know what it is like to create state and society without God. We have a unique experience of trying to reach happiness and wellbeing without God's grace and we know that this experiment failed. It is our common experience, including the tragedy of martyrdom and confession, that should show to the whole world that a prosperous and just society can not be built if God is banished from it. This is the reason why Christians take part in many important public events, relying on their faith and motivating their deeds by Christian morality.

A great event took place here several days ago. Together with Metropolitan Jozef Michalik, President of the Polish Bishops' Conference, we signed a Message to the Peoples of Russia and Poland. This Message contains a very important idea, maybe it is the most important one: the only way to transform, to change relationships between the two peoples for the better is to do it with God's help. It does not mean that we do not attach any importance to political, cultural, and other human factors that can facilitate this process, it is just that our main hope is in God, in the power of prayer.

And today we are praying for the peoples of Russia and Poland, for our reconciliation. We invoke God's grace revealed on Mount Tabor upon our deeds and believe that He will hear our prayers.

Your Beatitude, I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for what is happening in the Polish Orthodox Church today. I see major changes made in recent years: building of new churches, development of theological education, social and youth work, fundamental changes in the relations between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches in Poland. All this is our contribution to transfiguring the world around us.

I would like to convey to all of you love and blessing from the Russian Orthodox Church, Mother Church for the Polish Church. And I cordially wish you to go from strength to strength. May God save Poland and Holy Russia and grant His mercy to all who pray to Him with faith."

After the Liturgy, according to the tradition of Holy Mount Grabarka, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church blessed the cross installed at the eastern side of the Church of the Holy Transfiguration.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa presented His Holiness Patriarch Kirill with the Order of St Mary Magdalene (1st class) on behalf of the Holy Synod of the Polish Orthodox Church.

Members of the official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church were also awarded Orders of St Mary Magdalene.

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