



## **Representatives of Local Orthodox Churches take part in grand reception on the occasion of the Sunday of Orthodoxy**

On March 4, 2012, after the Divine Liturgy at the cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour, there was a reception on the occasion of the Sunday of Orthodoxy at the church's refectory chambers. Present at the reception were His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian, bishops and clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church, representatives of Local Orthodox Churches and diplomats.

Greeting the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church on behalf of the representatives of Local Orthodox Churches, Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrenia said in particular, 'Today we celebrate a triumph over heresies and it means a victory of life over death, since deviation from Orthodoxy is death while false doctrine is a lethal mistake. *This is the faith of the apostles! This is the faith of the fathers! This is the Orthodox faith! This faith has established the universe!*

'We who are in Holy Rus' also celebrate a new triumph of Orthodoxy – the victory of our holy faith over godlessness. We also celebrate the rise of the Orthodox Church in Russia in all spheres and on all levels and, most importantly, the fact that the holy faith has spread throughout the boundless North to fill everything with Christ's all-beautiful fragrance.

'The Russian Church today is a powerful center of gravitation, a reliable pointer and light-bearing beacon of the Universal Church. And our joy is especially great because its helmsman is His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, a skilful theologian, a brilliant church orator whose sophisticated speeches are delightful to all who listen to them, the unconquerable fighter Kirill whose heart burns with love for the Church and concern for her unity'.

In his speech, Greek Ambassador Michael Spinellis noted that the unity of the Church and the people is a guarantee of the unity of the country. He underscored the role that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill plays in the preservation of this unity in Russia.

The Serbian Ambassador Ms. Jelica Kurjak said that as Christians face new challenges of the modern world, they should find the common values which could help them unite and give a common response to these challenges.

In conclusion of the reception, the participants were addressed by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia. He said:

‘Your Eminences and Graces, Dear Fathers, Your Excellences, Brothers and Sisters:

‘I would like to warmly thank all those who said kind words at this table – bishops and ambassadors and the newly consecrated bishop.

‘Today is a special day when we celebrate the Triumph of Orthodoxy, not national Orthodoxy, Russian or Greek, but Universal Orthodoxy. On this day we lift up a special prayer that our Orthodox Church may be united, that no national or political features characteristic of particular countries, no philosophical or political influences made on Orthodox people today may destroy the unity which is of enormous spiritual and civilizational value. Indeed, the world would have been quite different if Orthodoxy had not existed.

‘We may not find it always easy to defend our positions. Sometimes people, looking at the Orthodox Christians, say that we are not very up-to-date people; we do not quite know how to keep abreast of the times. It is a wrong approach. Because to be modern does not mean to blindly copy someone else’s ideas, values or stereotypes elaborated through the mass media. Moreover, if one wants to preserve one’s freedom, one should learn to make a critical assessment of everything offered by the modern world. When a person becomes an object of manipulations, when he loses his identity, when he blindly, either in his foolishness or fear, repeats someone else’s thoughts, he loses his freedom.

Due to their commitment to the two millennia-long tradition, the Orthodox Christians have an opportunity and ability to assess all that is offered by the modern world by the criterion of church tradition. And as long as we are able to preserve it, we will preserve our freedom.

I very much hope that today, despite the difficulties experienced by Russia and other Slavic countries and Greece and countries in the Middle East, the inner spiritual power of people, their ability to preserve their spiritual, cultural and national identity will help them in these difficult times.

As for fraternal Orthodox Churches, on whose behalf His Eminence Athanasios spoke today for which I am grateful to him, our task is to preserve the unity of the Universal Orthodox Church despite the elements of this world, because we are really one body.

At the same time, we should treat people who belong to other Christian traditions with attention, respect and openness. The more so that some Slavic countries close to us in culture and in spirit belong to a different religious tradition. I would like to say the same with regard to other religions, first of all, Islam. It

also belongs to the Eastern culture and the Orthodox Church has been able to live traditionally in peace with its followers.

As unexpected confrontations of various cultural models are taking place in the globalizing world today, the experience of Orthodoxy, which has always lived in peace with its neighbours and which has worked out a certain *modus vivendi* in relations with people of other views and beliefs, can be very much on demand in Europe and throughout the world. It does not mean that we should present our own experience as the best of all – God will judge who is the best and who is the worst. But we should carefully preserve this experience and put it in the basis of our relations with the world around us.

May the Lord preserve the unity of Orthodox nations and Universal Orthodoxy so that the power of God may continue to be revealed in our Church, enabling people to stay committed to Christ, to grow in His commandments and to build life according with His law’.

*DECR Communication Service*

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