



Ukrainian Orthodox Church Holy Synod's message on 65th anniversary of Victory in Great Patriotic War

In anticipation of celebrations to mark the 65th anniversary of the Great Victory, the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has issued the following message:

'The fruit of righteousness will be peace;
the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever' (Is. 32:17)

Sixty five years have passed since the time when our people won a victory in the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War.

This Victory is a sacred memory of the great and high price that humanity paid for a longed-for peace.

This Victory is a great occasion after a terrible disaster; it is a memory that withers the heart filled with grief for those who fell in action in that war. It brought in a lethal harvest – the suffering and death of scores of millions, ravaged cities and villages, destroyed monuments of world culture and history, *ruin and destruction, famine and sword* (Is. 51:19).

The struggle with fascism united all the healthy forces of humanity. Many victims were sacrificed on the altar of victory. The soldiers of the Soviet Army and the Anti-Hitlerite Coalition armies, partisans, underground fighters, people in the occupied territories and workers on the home front did not spare their lives, strength and health for the sake of the holy goal to bring closer *peace and truth* (Jer. 33:6). This struggle revealed people's best moral qualities: self-sacrificingness, heroism, patriotism, courage and, first of all, love of the neighbour.

The feat of heroes who defeated fascism will last to the end of time. The world should always remember the lessons of World War II and to do all that is possible to prevent the growth of thorns of aggressiveness, xenophobia, political extremism and totalitarianism.

The memory of the bitter lessons of war is also important because the shoots of false ideological trends which exist in the world have not been eradicated yet. People are still killed in terrorist attacks. And

today in relations between countries the norms of international law are violated and force is used. There are still authoritarian regimes which foster aggressive intentions.

During the Great Patriotic War, Ukraine suffered heavy losses as an arena of fierce battles. Babi Yar in Kiev became Ukraine's golgotha where over 100 thousand people of various ethnicities were shot. Such golgotha ravines covered with sorrowful creases all the face of our motherland. Just as the ashes of burnt French Oradour and Byelorussian Khatyn beat in humanity's heart, so we should remember the inextinguishable ashes of scorched-out Ukrainian villages.

On this day, the Holy Church calls to honour the memory of war heroes and victims. They fulfilled the commandment of Christ our Saviour: 'Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends' (Jn. 15:13). They sacrificed their lives for peace and security; they washed our land with their blood thus revealing the greatness of courageous resistance to evil and violence. Let us lift up our prayers for the peace of their souls. May Merciful Christ give them rest in the mansions of the Heavenly Father.

During the celebrations to mark the 65th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, special attention should be given to war veterans. Their valour, patriotism, military and work feats should become an example for the present and coming generations. May the Lord give those of them who have lived to see this glorious date good health and blessed long life.

We deeply bow before every one who takes care of war veterans today, making their lives happier and brighter.

Just as it was in the distant year of 1945, we celebrate the victory during the festive Easter days, and this gives our joy a great sacral meaning. With our hearts filled with gratitude for 'grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord' (1 Tim. 1:2), we lift up prayer to the Almighty for Ukraine and for all humanity who need 'righteousness, faith, love and peace' (2 Tim. 2:22).

Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed!

On behalf of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church,

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Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine

Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

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