



Address by Patriarch Kirill during Divine Liturgy at Patriarchal Cathedral of Annunciation in Alexandria

**Your Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria and All Africa, Dear Brother and
Concelebrant Beloved in the Lord;**

Fellow-Archpastors,

All-Honorable Fathers,

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I thank God for the joy of fraternal communion in Christ with all of you – the joy given us today at the Holy Cup. Partaking of the Holy Gifts together, we truly become one body and *one spirit with the Lord* (1 Cor. 6:17) and certainly with one another. The Eucharistic communion gives us a living feeling of love tying Christ's disciples together. It is also pours in us a new strength for fulfilling the Gospel of the Kingdom, for spreading the fruits of Christ's redemptive action to all our deeds and thoughts. Through the mysterious participation in His death and resurrection, through the continually renewed participation in His broken and risen Body, every one of us acquires the ability to serve the Lord in His mental vineyard, which is the Holy Church.

Today's patriarchal con-celebration of the Divine Liturgy has happened at a special time in the church year. Every Christian Orthodox soul today joins its voice in the choir of the Universal Church in bearing the life-asserting witness to our faith.

Christ is risen!

The assurance of St. Thomas that we remember today has a great symbolical meaning for us. The faith in the resurrection of Christ transformed the consciousness of nations and revived them to a new life, as we know it from the history of the great Christian civilization. However, the propagation of faith in Christ who died and was risen from the dead is impossible without the apostolic ministry of the Church, which from the first days of its existence has been manifested in the two most important forms: discipleship and mission.

Speaking about the apostolic ministry of the ancient Church of Alexandria, one cannot but mention the two brightest periods in its history. The first one stretched from the 2nd to the mid-5th century. After the

Mother of Churches – the Holy Zion was destroyed in 70, the Christian community in Alexandria, using for its own benefit all the privileges of the capital city of the Egyptian Province, occupied indisputably the pre-eminent place in the Christian East – the situation which lasted till the rise of the royal city of Constantinople. It was here, in Egypt, on the junction of an intellectual search for the world of antiquity and the living experience of the Church that the Christian theology was first shaped. African deserts, having accepted into its austere fold the first hermits, became a cradle of Christian monasticism known for its rich magisterial literature.

The second period, which can be described as a time of renewed apostolic ministry carried out by the Church of Alexandria, are our days. The long and fruitful missionary work among African peoples, directed by the Patriarch of Alexandria, has been given its canonical expression in the jurisdiction exercised by His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria over the whole continent. With admiration the Orthodox throughout the world follow the progress of the Theological Seminary in Kenya, which has already graduated a considerable number of African clergy, and the preaching of the gospel to natives in 54 African states with their diverse cultures. No wonder that the Apostolic Patriarchate of Alexandria is now led by Your Beatitude who worked much in the missionary field when you were the ruling metropolitan of Zimbabwe.

The faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church who, as the fates decree, have found themselves on both sides of the equator have also found in the person of Your Beatitude a loving and caring protector. According to the existing fraternal agreements, the pastoral care of their compatriots is taken by priests of the Russian Orthodox Church who are sent to work under supervision of Alexandrian bishops. The Cairo Representation of the Moscow Patriarchate serves not only as a link between our two Churches but also a spiritual center for people who come from countries of the Russian World. Our double gratitude for this continued and truly apostolic concern for their spiritual well-being goes to Your Beatitude and the bishops in whose dioceses our clergy carry out their ministry.

In our era the apostleship of the Church has another important dimension. All the Local Churches are called to bear common witness to Christ's truth in face of the challenges of today's world. Universal Orthodoxy faces the need to meet the challenge of preserving the unique Christian civilization in all its ethnic and cultural diversity. The rich Tradition of the Church is an adequate ground for common efforts. The resumption of preparations for a Pan-Orthodox Council gives us hope that a common position will be found on many urgent problems of the time. A success of this sacred initiative is directly dependent on the good will of all the Local Orthodox Churches.

Your Beatitude, once again I would like to thank you for the warm welcome accorded to me and my fellow-travelers in this glorious city. I pray that God's grace may fill the hearts of the faithful of this old but always young Church of Alexandria. May Holy Orthodoxy prosper and spread in the African continent!

May the message of Christ's Resurrection inspire you for new efforts in strengthening the God-commanded unity of the Holy Churches of God!

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