



## **Patriarch Kirill: Church unity should extend beyond state frontiers, political divisions, social, age, cultural and other human differences**

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, in his report to the first Bishops' Conference which opened on 2 February 2010 at the Church of Christ the Saviour, addressed the theme of church unity.

The 2008 Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church adopted a Resolution on the Unity of the Church. This document recognizes in particular the need to enliven the gift of church-wide unity by strengthening diocesan cooperation and developing communication between various parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, it was deemed important to take into account their inherent ethnic and cultural characteristics, remembering that respect for these special features constitutes the power of our Holy Church and contributes to her growth and unity.

"I consider this document to be 'a road map', a strict compliance with which can deliver us from many difficulties and help us to multiply the fruits of church unity", the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church stressed.

His Holiness underscored in particular that to consolidate church unity it was important to disseminate liturgical and catechetical texts as well as major documents of the Russian Orthodox Church including Patriarchal messages in the vernacular of peoples the Church nourishes.

'Our unity should extend beyond state frontiers, political divisions and social, age, cultural and other human differences', His Holiness said.

He also reminded the conference that the Russian Church is not only a Church of the Russian Federation, not even a Church of the historical Rus'. 'Our Church's care of her faithful extends to many countries today. Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova constitute today the core of the vast space of our common civilization which originated in the Dnieper font of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles. Our duty is to take pastoral care of our believers and to bear witness before the modern world to the spiritual values of Orthodox tradition and to the historical and cultural unity it has generated'.

According to His Holiness, the Moscow Patriarchate is open to common actions with state structures and public organizations in all the countries of Russian Orthodoxy, and much has already been done in

this respect. Thus, along with the development of parishes and dioceses abroad, a system of cultural and social ties is being built to maintain relations with compatriots who left the countries of historical Rus' to live outside them.

'As compatriots we understand not only Russians but also Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Moldavians who live in diaspora', the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church reminded the conference.

He dwelt in his report on his visit to Ukraine in summer 2009. During that pastoral visit he went to central, eastern, southern and western regions of the country. He prayed at the Kiev Monastery of the Caves, the Svyatogorsk and Pochaev and other Monasteries of the Ukrainian Church. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the place in Chersonese where St. Vladimir was baptized. Among the significant events during that visit was a meeting of the Russian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod which was held for the first time in Kiev, thus underlining the importance of 'the Mother of Russian Cities' as the original primatial chair of Rus' and one of the Synodal capitals of our Church today.

'Visiting dioceses, talking with hierarchs and meeting with the people of God in the Ukrainian land, I was convinced again and again that the Holy Rus' is not a speculative notion, not just a part of our history. It is our present', His Holiness stressed.

His Holiness made a special mention of the role of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church which, despite the active work of church unity foes, has successfully performed her salvific service as a true Church of the Ukrainian people preserving spiritual unity with the Plenitude of the Russian Orthodox Church. 'This commitment to church unity is an example for us all', His Holiness said.

He also spoke about his visits to other countries in the canonical space of the Russian Orthodox Church including Belarus, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and expressed an intention to continue visiting states to which the pastoral care of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia extends, since he believes it his duty 'to take care of all the faithful of the Russian Church regardless of their residence'.

*DECR Communication Service*