



## **Address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia at the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Cathedral of St George**

Your Holiness,

Beloved brother and concelebrant in the Lord:

Most reverend archpastors, venerable pastors of this holy Patriarchal church, brothers and sisters:

The most important event in our visit to the Holy Church of Constantinople – the concelebration of the Divine Liturgy and partaking of the Holy Body and Blood of the Lord, our unity in the Holy Spirit took place today. Indeed, the life of the Church is focused on the Eucharist, from which it draws strength. Following the commandment of Church, we commemorate His expiatory deed and, sharing the Eucharist repast, become one body and one spirit with the Lord (cf. Eph 4:4; Cor 6:17), closely united with one another. The Saviour prayed before His death that his disciples may be one, as the Father and the Son are one (cf. Jn 17:22), and we, the followers of Church, must diligently care for preserving our unity! The concelebration of the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches is a vivid manifestation of this unity.

Our stay in the cathedral city of the Patriarchate of Constantinople with its great shrines of Orthodoxy provokes profound feelings. It is with reverence that we look at the great shrines of Orthodoxy and recollect the most important events in the history of the Church happened on this earth, such as the miraculous intercession of the Mother of God who many times protected this city from invasions. We also recollect the events linked to the Baptism of Russia.

I am especially happy to meet the living bearers of the centuries-long tradition, steadfast in their faith and loyal to the memory of their forefathers, these children of the Holy Church of Constantinople lead by their Father the Patriarch. In spite of all cataclysms in history, the name of Christ is shining in this city and in this holy church. We thank God who vouchsafed us to see the Most Holy Church of Constantinople living in peace and God's grace, and its Primate – in good health and spiritual strength.'

Today's weekly celebration of the Resurrection of Christ is combined in the calendar of the Church of Constantinople falls on the commemoration day of St Athanasius of Mt Athos. One cannot help seeing a symbolic meaning of the fact that we concelebrated on the commemorations day of a pillar of the Athonite asceticism. We know that the rule of St Athanasius for the Great Laura that he founded had brought about a time of flourishing for the monks on the Holy Mountain. Fifty years after the blessed demise of St Athanasius, St Anthony who was tonsured a monk on Mt Athos returned to Russia and founded another great laura – the Laura of the Caves in Kiev.

It was from the Kievan hills that monastic tradition has spread throughout Russia. As on Mt Athos, the monasteries in Russia have become not only places of spiritual deeds of the monks, but also the real spiritual and educational centres. The monks copied and kept books, while the imbued with the spirit ascetics who attained perfection serve the world as experienced spiritual teachers and preachers of the Gospel of Church, as defenders of the Orthodox faith and the unity of the Church.

At present the monasteries in Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia and other countries in spiritual care of the Moscow Patriarchate preserve the faith and care for the unity of our Church.

It was through the rich monistic tradition that the Russian Church got the Liturgical Ordos from Byzantine, first of the Studion, and later of Jerusalem that is being used in the monasteries and parishes. The services to the Russian saints and other liturgical texts were written on the pattern of the Byzantine hymns. The Greek were the first teachers of the Russian iconpainters. The Old Russian church singing also experienced the influence of the Byzantine school. Russian theology is linked with the names of Sophronius and Joannicius Likhuds who founded the first theological school in Moscow – the Slavonic-Greek-Latin Academy, which gave the present Moscow Theological Academy.

In all spheres of the life of the Church we see common tradition that indissolubly links the Church of Constantinople with her one Daughter, the Russian Church, which now is her sister equal in honour. Our common Tradition is a solid foundation for common witness before the modern world. When religion is ousted to the margins of social life and the very concept of sin is being erased, when traditional moral values are radically revised and the principle of gain and profit become a basis of economics, we must combine our efforts in asserting Gospel standards and in giving common Orthodox answer to the challenges of the time.

Your Holiness! Today, on the remarkable day of our concelebration we wish all the believers of the Holy Church of Constantinople living in this city and in other cities and countries of the world God's help, spiritual strength and the peace of Christ. We thank you for generous hospitality in this blessed land and pray to the saints of God to help you in your lofty Patriarchal ministry.

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/58889/>