



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's address at the session of the Holy Synod held on 8th December 2020

On 8th December 2020, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church held an on-line session under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who delivered an opening address. The text of the speech is given below.

Your Eminences and Your Graces, Your Beatitude,

I cordially greet you, rejoicing at the opportunity to meet with you, albeit remotely, to see you, thanks to modern communication facilities, and to hold a session of the Holy Synod of our Church, during which we will consider a whole range of issues of profound significance for the life of our Church, including some important personnel matters.

We have nine items on our agenda and I will enumerate them: a report by His Eminence Hilarion, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, on his trip to Serbia with the view of attending the funeral of His Holiness Patriarch Irinej; a report by Metropolitan Hilarion on the activities of the Commission for Old-Rite Parishes and Cooperation with the Old-Rite Community; a report by His Eminence Metropolitan Dionisy concerning the Regulations of the Commission for Bringing Shrines for Veneration (we need to approve the text of the Regulations); a report by Vladyka Dionisy on the Commission for Promoting Orthodox Pilgrimage (we are to approve the Commission membership); a report by His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion on the Commission for Theology and Theological Education of the Inter-Council Presence; a report by His Eminence Metropolitan Dionisy on the approval of liturgical texts of akathists, troparions and kontakions; my reports on institutions abroad and on the 24th Christmas Readings; finally, there is a very important matter pertaining to appointment of hierarchs and to the changes that we will have to make given the current circumstances, including the demise of our eminent Vladykas.

Before we begin the session, I would like to draw your attention to the recent sad events in the life of the Church and to say that among those who died over this period were His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, as well as His Eminence Iov (Tyvonyuk), former Metropolitan of Chelyabinsk and Zlatoust; His Eminence Ioanniky (Kobzev), former Metropolitan of Lugansk and Alchevsk, and His Eminence Feofan, Metropolitan of Kazan and Tatarstan. I suggest that in the beginning of the session we prayerfully commemorate our deceased brothers and sing 'Memory Eternal' to them.

This past period in the life of our Church and our people was marked by sorrowful developments caused

by the spreading coronavirus infection. These circumstances affected the life of the Church, the life of our laity, monastics, and clergy. In some regions restrictions on church attendance were introduced. First of all, it concerned the capital city of Moscow, where the situation with the spreading coronavirus infection differed considerably and still differs from the situation in other cities and towns and in the rest of our country. In Moscow, the percentage of the diseased is really high, so at some point a decision was taken to impose restrictions on church attendance. It was a very painful and hard measure, but it had to be taken, because the disease was spreading too dynamically. Unfortunately, this dreadful infection affected many of the clergymen: a large number of our brothers, dozens of people – I will not say the exact number, for some clarifications are still needed – but some 100 people died from this disease. And some are saying, even people vested in ecclesiastical robes, that there is no epidemic, that it is a fabrication, that all this has been brought into our life in order to restrict people from attending churches and travelling freely. The response to this lie is the hardest truth about our demised fathers and brothers. Now there is no possibility to enumerate all the deceased, among whom there are bishops of God, and I would ask all to commemorate our fathers, brothers, and monastic sisters who died from this terrible pestilence and sing 'Memory Eternal' to them.

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