



Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III: Our unity is crucial, for it is itself both a fruit and a witness to the truth of God.



On June 21st, 2021, the Russian Spiritual Mission in Jerusalem was visited by His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of the Holy City of Jerusalem and all Palestine. On the day of the Holy Spirit, the Primate of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church led the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Trinity Cathedral of the Mission and attended a gala reception on the occasion of the holiday.

Addressing the participants of the reception, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos said:

Dear Father Alexander,

Respected Members of the Russian Diplomatic Service, Your Eminences,

Your Graces, Dear Fathers,

Beloved Monastics, Sisters and Brothers,

As we join you today for this blessed feast, we recall the words that we sing at this time:

When the Most High came down

and confounded tongues of men at Babel, He divided the nations.

When He dispensed the tongues of fire, He called all to unity,

and with one voice we glorify the Most Holy Spirit.

(Kontakion of the Feast of Pentecost)

We have just demonstrated in a tangible way the oneness of our Orthodox Church in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. This oneness that finds its expression in the sharing of the common Chalice is the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter, and who governs the whole life of the Church. In this way we live in our own day the same unbroken unity that was given to the Church at Pentecost.

We see in our world the phenomenon of economic, technological, and entrepreneurial globalization. So much activity on which our life depends is exercised on an international level. But we Christians cannot forget that we live our own universal life. We too occupy the oikumene. We are truly global. This is because the Church lives the life of the Holy Spirit, and this life is the universal gift to humankind. It is available to all, open to all, a free gift to all.

We know this because as Christians generally, and as Orthodox in particular, we have a mission to the whole world – a global mission, if you like – to be a living martyria to the truth of God and the light of the Holy Spirit which we have received from the Apostles. This truth is the wellspring of eternal life and salvation for all humankind, and this truth is of ultimate importance for all peoples.

This is why our unity – the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost – is crucial, for our unity is itself both a fruit and a witness to the truth of God. In all things we must endeavour to overcome our human weaknesses and temptations that threaten our unity, and allow the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and dwell in our hearts. Before we can show this to anyone else, we must live this in the life of the Church, and we are

called to do everything in our power to overcome any anomalies of Church life that our human weakness and sinfulness can so easily cause.

It is incumbent upon us all, the Orthodox faithful, as well as the leaders of our Orthodox Churches, to place ourselves under the obedience of the unity of the Holy Spirit. In a world that is torn apart by human divisions, fear, prejudice, and selfishness, the Church must live a different life if we are to be able to carry out our mission.

This is as important for Churches in traditionally Orthodox countries as it is for Orthodox Churches in multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic societies. We all have the unique and challenging responsibility to follow faithfully in the footsteps of the Apostles by the living truth that has been given to us by God and expressed in our own unity. May God continue to bestow His grace upon us that we may be faithful to this vocation, so that we may make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:3).

We take this opportunity to wish His Excellency Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, health, happiness, and strength in his leadership. We acknowledge with deep gratitude his commitment to the support of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

We would also like to express our fraternal love in Christ for our brother His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill of Moscow and All Russia, and wish Him many years in His primatial ministry. The country of Russia and its' peoples have had a long and close relationship with the Holy Land for centuries, and we cherish the bond of unity that we enjoy.

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