Patriarch Kirill greets the participants of the XXVIII annual General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy



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To: The Organizers, Participants and Guests of the XXVIII annual General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Orthodoxy

Esteemed Sergei Anatolievich Gavrilov, president of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy,

Esteemed participants and guests of the General Assembly, dear brothers and sisters,

Please accept my heartfelt greetings to all of you who have gathered on the island of Crete for the session of the XXVIII annual General Assembly of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy, the topic of which is the future of the world and the future of Europe after the pandemic.

At this present difficult time for us all, the thoughts of the participants inevitably turn to the problem of the coronavirus infection which has changed the lives of millions of people and has become a global challenge for all of humankind. This challenge has generated alarmist fears, privations, pain and grief from loss. Yet it has also enabled the manifestation within many of our contemporaries such lofty moral qualities as sacrificial love, mercy and the willingness to serve one's neighbour. It has been above all medical staff who have found themselves on the frontline of the fight against an invisible and cunning enemy. Their ministry has become a true act of self-sacrificing heroism harnessed to a risk to their own lives and health.

Alongside medical workers in the 'red zone' there are also clergymen. They prayerfully comfort and encourage the sick, give them holy communion and have accompanied the deceased on their journey into eternity. Not for a single day has the Orthodox Church halted her saving ministry. The epidemic, however, has brought into our lives a great number of changes that have significantly narrowed down the opportunities for fraternal communication, pilgrimages to Orthodox holy sites and the joint prayers of Christians from various Local Orthodox Churches.

We are witnesses of how today the integrity of the global Orthodox family has endured a great blow as a result of the division caused by the anticanonical actions aimed at legalizing the schism in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church continues to be discriminated against, her church buildings continue to be seized, her rights limited (including her legal rights), right up to being forcibly denied the right to use her own proper name. This alienation among Orthodox Christians as a result of ecclesiastical events in Ukraine has, unfortunately, gone beyond its confines and spread to a number of Local Orthodox Churches. I firmly believe that a way out of this crisis is possible only by returning to the canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church while being open to dialogue. May the experience of working together within the framework of the Interparliamentary Assembly on Orthodoxy prove to be beneficial in seeking out ways to its renewal.

I wish you all God's aid and blessed success in your beneficial labours for the strengthening of solidarity, a sense of togetherness and the unity of the Orthodox peoples.

+Kirill

Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'

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