



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill congratulated on his 75th birthday by inter-Christian organizations and international charities**



Congratulatory messages on His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's 75th continue coming to the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. Among those who sent best wishes to the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church are Archpriest John Sauka, acting Secretary General of the World Council of Churches; Rev. Dr Casely Essamuh, Secretary of the Global Christian Forum; Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, President of the Aid to Churches in Need foundation (Kirche in Not), Prof Andrea Riccardi, the founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio; and Prof Adriano Roccucci, Vice-President of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

The letter to Patriarch Kirill from the World Council of Churches refers to the longstanding cooperation of His Holiness with this organization. Archpriest John Sauka thanked His Holiness for his commitment to the inter-Orthodox, inter-church and interreligious relations and dialogue.

“We remember with appreciation your leadership to the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, coinciding with particularly difficult and challenging years in the history of the Russian people and the world at large. Finally, we express our deep gratitude to Your Holiness for, as head of the Russian Orthodox Church, you continued to support the World Council of Churches, taking several initiatives promoting dialogue, defending justice, and strongly affirming peace”, the acting Secretary General of the WCC states in his letter.

In his congratulatory message, Secretary of the Global Christian Forum Rev. Dr Casely Essamuh notes in particular, “Indeed, you have carved a niche in the history books of the Great Church of Russia, and of the worldwide fellowship of churches as well. Your contribution in leading the Church during such a significant time of change has been spectacularly celebrated, and deservedly so. Your open hands engagement with other churches – in ecumenical fraternity and friendship also deserves equal commendation. On the occasion of your birthday, we declare that we are grateful to God that you were born and have lived to make such an impact. We declare that the rest of your life will be best ever”.

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza in his letter puts a special stress on the fruitfulness of relations developed in the last thirty years between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Aid to Churches in Need foundation. He also notes that in the follow-up of the agreements concluded by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and Pope Francis in 2016 in Havana, a series of joint projects were implemented for support of Christians in the Middle East and in defence of the family and values.

“The totality of the gifts of God received by Your Holiness during the 75 years of life is only a preparation for those of them which await you in the future. The most significant gift that we would like to wish you is Christ Himself who is given to us as light, power, love through His special presence in the Sacrament of the Eucharist”, the President of the Aid to Churches in Need stressed.

Prof Andrea Riccardi in his congratulatory message testified that the longstanding cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Community of Sant’Egidio brought good fruits in the service of charity, in the joint defence of peace and traditional Christian values, in the development of Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.

“In face of the challenges of our time, I often muse on the future of Christianity. There are many disturbing things. We spoke much about it in the interesting and inspiring talks I had the pleasure to have with Your Holiness. Our conversations always offered an opportunity for a profound exchange of opinions and mutual enrichment, for sharing our opinions of the developments in the world and in the life of Churches”, the founder of the Community of St’Egidio noted.

“I would like to assure Your Holiness of my profound respect for you and for your service”, Prof Adriano Roccucci stated in his congratulatory message, “Congratulating you from my heart on your birthday, I wish you a great many fruits of the Lord’s mercy in your service for the Church”.

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