THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill lays a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the eve of Victory Day



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On May 8, the eve of the 78th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Alexander Garden by the Kremlin wall.

Among those who attended the ceremony were Metropolitan Pavel of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Patriarchal vicar for the Moscow metropolia; Metropolitan Dionisiy of Voskresensk, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, the first Patriarchal vicar for Moscow and abbot of the Novospassky monastery; Metropolitan Antony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, archbishops, bishops, top-ranking clergymen, as well as deans of church districts of the Moscow diocese, abbots and hegumenesses of the stauropegic monasteries and convents, and Moscow clerics.

Also attending the ceremony were the military commandant of Moscow, Lieutenant-General Yevgeny Seleznev, officers and soldiers of the battalion of the Guard of Honour of the 154th separate commandant's service Preobrazhensky regiment.

The wreath-laying ceremony was followed by a minute of silence, after which the military orchestra performed Russia's national anthem.

The Primate, hierarchs and clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church proclaimed Memory Eternal to the commanders and soldiers who laid down their lives in battle for the faith and the Fatherland and chanted the Paschal troparion, Patriarchal Press Service reports.

The event continued with the ceremonial march of Guards of Honour.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill congratulated the servicemen and in their person the Russian Armed Forces, saying: "Brothers soldiers, defenders of our Fatherland! I congratulate all military personnel on the feast, this sacred and great day marking the deliverance of our country from the awful enemy.

"Our country paid dearly for the victory. It was a conscious feat of courageous people who saved our Fatherland by their enormous labour and unequalled heroism. We, as the heirs of this victory, must love our Motherland and defend it without fear, if need be.

Russia is a truly independent state. In order to remain independent and free and shape life according to people's will our armed forces must know no fear.

Wishing all military men to be brave, courageous and aware of the importance of the mission entrusted to them, I invoke God's blessing upon you."

Thereafter, His Holiness addressed the hierarchs, clergymen and monastics, congratulating them and reminding them of the situation of the Church during the years of the Great Patriotic War. He said that many clergymen had been arrested before it and many innocent believers had been suffering alike. "The enemy thought that Christians in the Soviet Union would not lend support to the state power. Indeed, how can one support the power that tried to stamp out the faith and destroy the Church? But Metropolitan Sergy, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church in those days, made a historic statement in the very first hour of aggression, calling all Orthodox Christians to join in the fight against the enemy, thus showing his selfless devotion to the country. His words touched the soul of many people and inspired them to defend their Fatherland. We are aware of the important role played by the Russian Orthodox Church in mobilization of spiritual strength of our people and promotion of patriotism among

them.

May God grant that no one ever encroaches on the sacred boundaries of our state. For that end, the country must be very strong, and we pray for its welfare, for its President, civil authorities, the armed forces, and all people. May the Lord help us to be like-minded and capable of defending our Fatherland even on the invisible spiritual front by words and prayers.

Cordial congratulations on Victory Day! Christ is Risen!”

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