THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Address by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the 25th anniversary of the start of NATO aggression against Yugoslavia



DECR Communication Service, 24.03.2024.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' sent a message to His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije of Serbia on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the start of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

To: His Holiness Porfirije, Archbishop of Pec, Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci, Patriarch of Serbia

Your Holiness, beloved Brother and Concelebrant at the God's Throne!

I cordially greet you and wish you strength and God's aid during the beneficial time of Lent.

This year, the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy coincides with a memorable mournful date - the 25th anniversary of the start of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The tragic events that took place a quarter of a century ago are not only a sorrowful page in the modern political history of Europe showing the intention of the Western world countries to destroy a large Slavic state by encouraging and supporting nationalist separatism, but also a revealing episode of the same old struggle against the Orthodox faith and its followers led by “the ruler of this world” (Jn 12:31). Obviously, the main goal of the aggressors was to forcibly separate the Serbian autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija – the cradle of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The courage and resistance of the fraternal Serbian people in this unequal confrontation has once again confirmed the justice of the words said by the Holy Right-believing Prince Alexander Nevsky: “God is not in power, but in truth.”

In those awful days, I happened to be in Belgrade and see with my own eyes not only the disastrous strikes on the city, but also manifestation of the indestructible will of its residents who remained unbowed, undefeated and full of spiritual strength and dignity. Having awakened people to the historical memory, the tragedy inspired many contemporaries to return to the holy faith of their fathers, to comprehend their belonging to the Kosovo Covenant, and to feel personal responsibility for the fate of their beloved homeland and for the spiritual choice of their children and future generations.

Both in the dramatic time now remembered and in the years that followed, the Russian Orthodox Church constantly raised her voice, condemning that what had happened as “the mystery of lawlessness already at work” (2 Th 2:7) and trying to draw the world public’s attention to the crime committed with tacit support lended by Western countries to the destruction of the centuries-old shrines of the Serbian Orthodox Church with culmination in the inglorious terrible ‘March Pogrom 2004.’

I offer up prayers for the rest of the souls of the Church of St. Sava’s children who died from the bombings or fell at the hands of the extremists. Memory eternal to them.

With warm recollections of our recent meeting in Moscow, I remain as ever with brotherly love in the Lord,

+KIRILL

PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUS’

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