



Your Holiness, Most Holy Master and our Merciful Father,

Christ is risen!

On this “solemn feast day” (Psalm 80.4), when the Holy Church continues to celebrate with great solemnity the risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church – her bishops, clergy, monks, nuns and laymen and laywomen – enjoy the good fortune to render praise to the Provider of all good things and Maker and express heartfelt congratulations to you, our Primate, on the occasion of your name’s day.

Guided by the heavenly Comforter, your spiritual father and teacher the ever-memorable metropolitan of Leningrad and Novgorod Nikodim providentially gave you the name when tonsured as a monk of the enlightener and teacher of the Slavs the Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril, fifty years ago now foreseeing the lofty ministry that God had ordained for you to “shew forth his salvation” (Psalm 95.2) for the peoples of Holy Russia so that after many decades of spiritual destruction and the imposition upon society of militant atheism to “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1.17).

“Now the time has come for the concentration of our spiritual powers. Now our nation is to reveal her strong and mature faith.” These words we may consider to be the slogan of your Primatial ministry. Throughout all of Russia not only many churches and monastic houses are being built and adorned, but something more important is happening, which is to say that through your Primatial care and prayers there are being established Christian communities centred around the Eucharistic table in the spirit of sacrificial love, piety and active witness to the risen Lord. The establishment of theological centres, the realization of scriptural study programmes, the improvement of the quality of spiritual and religious education, and social and youth ministry are all, thanks be to God, elements of the Church’s mission which are being successfully developed today, the impulse for which is provided by you, Your Holiness.

Wisdom and the power of faith were characteristics of Saint Cyril, whom the Holy Church hymns as “wise in mind and name” (troparion to Saint Cyril) and whom she even honours with the rare title of ‘philosopher’, thereby emphasizing his ardent striving for the Truth and great love of knowledge. You too zealously endeavour to emulate your heavenly protector. Your constant desire for spiritual and intellectual perfection, your acute and inquisitive mind, your wisdom and unceasing need to grasp the essence of things are well known throughout the whole world and evoke sincere admiration and wonderment among many of our contemporaries.

God alone knows how heavy is the cross of Patriarchal rule. He alone knows how your loving and compassionate heart is pained and alarmed, which “sword shall pierce through thine own soul” (Luke 2.35) at this difficult time, for what you intercede as you stand before God in the stillness of your cell. We dare not even to imagine this and it is with reverence before your Primatial deeds that are done in humility that we bow our heads and ardently beseech you: never cease to pray for us, Your Holiness, always remember us your sinful and worthy children so that the chief Pastor Christ may strengthen us to be true and faithful helpers, like Simon of Cyrene in sharing with you the tribulations of ascent by the cross.

“There is nothing equal to prayer, for it renders the impossible possible and that which is unbearable bearable,” says the great teacher of the Church whom you revere Saint John Chrysostom in his *Five Sermons on Hannah*. We believe that through your ardent prayers the Merciful Lord will guard the Church of Russia in the world, humble those who “desire to divide and destroy her one people” by confirming this people in the Orthodox faith and love of Christ and neighbour.

Through the intercessions of the Holy and Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril the teacher of the Slavs, may the Lord who is bounteous in his gifts preserve you in good health, granting to you strength and wisdom to rightly divide the word of Christ’s truth and accomplish the lofty and responsible Patriarchal ministry that has been laid upon you to the glory of God and the good of the Church.

*Eis polla eti, Despota!*

The members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church

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