



## On Defender of the Fatherland Day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill lays wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow



### **DECR Communication Service, 23/02/2026**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, the Defender of the Fatherland Day, His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Alexander Garden in Moscow.

Taking part in the ceremony were: Metropolitan Pavel of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Patriarchal Vicar for the Moscow Metropolia; Metropolitan Georgy of Voskresensk, Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate, Patriarchal First Vicar for the city of Moscow, Abbot of the Novospassky Stavropegic Monastery; Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Feognost of Kashira, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monasticism, Abbot of the Donskoy Stavropegic Monastery; Metropolitan Arseny of Zvenigorod; Archbishop Foma of Odintsovo and Krasnogorsk, Head of the Administrative Secretariat of

the Moscow Patriarchate; Archbishop Savva of Zelenograd, Chairman of the Synodal Missionary Department, Deputy Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Archbishop Aksy of Podolsk and Lubertsy; Bishop Siluan of Pavlovsky Posad, Deputy Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Bishop Roman of Serpukhov, Abbot of the Vysotsky Stavropegic Monastery; Bishop Kirill of Sergiyev Posad and Dmitrov, Abbot of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius Lavra, Rector of the Moscow Theological Academy; Bishop Alexy of Ramenskoye, Personal Secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; Bishop Mefody of Yegoryevsk, Acting Chairman of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission, Rector of St. Tikhon's Orthodox University of the Humanities, Abbot of St. Nicholas Stavropegic Monastery in Ugresha; and Bishop Ioann of Bronnitsy, Abbot of the Vysokopetrovsky Stavropegic Monastery.

Among those in attendance was also Protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov, Patriarchal Secretary for the city of Moscow, as well as abbots and abbesses of stavropegic monasteries, deans of church districts and the Moscow clergy.

After the wreath-laying ceremony and a minute of silence, the National Anthem was performed. Then, the hierarchs and clergymen sang "Memory Eternal" to "all the commanders and soldiers who gave life on a battlefield for the faith and the Homeland." It was followed by a ceremonial march performed by an honour guard unit of the 154th Preobrazhensky Independent Commandant's Regiment, **reports**

#### **Patriarchal Press Service.**

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill congratulated Russian servicemen on the Defender of the Fatherland Day, saying:

"Dear brothers and sisters,

"Today, the Church and all people who love their Homeland honour courage and heroism of those who gave life for their country, as well as those who are defending our Homeland today, often risking their life. While this military service exists, which may even necessitate giving the most precious thing – a person's life – for the sake of others, there will exist a strong state and the very idea of heroism.

"All those who are defending our Fatherland today, who have taken the oath, are aware that this oath may demand from them things that are most important – their health and even their life. That notwithstanding, they take the oath and pledge to protect their fellow citizens and their Homeland.

"It is the greatest service, and it is wonderful that the Armed Forces and welfare of our country's defenders receive due attention in today's Russia. We believe that it will continue this way, that our Armed Forces will grow stronger and that the well-being of those who took the oath and declared their readiness to serve their country even unto death will be ensured. If the idea of heroism and readiness to

protect the Homeland will be preserved in our people, then our nation will remain sovereign and our state independent.

“The very existence of our Homeland depends on the military service. Therefore, the Armed Forces must rise to their vocation. They need to be mobilized; they need to be armed; they need to be disciplined; they need to be ready to give life for their country. They have all that today, and we pray to God that our people and our country may preserve the values associated with military service.

“As we know, not that long ago servicemen, along with all security and law enforcement agencies, were not treated with the respect they deserved. Those days are gone and, we hope, will never come back. May your service, without which the independent sovereign Russia cannot exist, grow stronger. For our Armed Forces to be powerful, people who take the oath and are ready to serve in the Armed Forces and protect their fellow citizens and their country need to be strong in spirit.

“May God’s blessing be upon you, your families, your relatives and friends, strengthening you and shielding you from every foe, visible and invisible. May God protect you!”

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church also addressed the clergy, saying:

“On this day, I also traditionally extend my greetings to you, my dear archpastors, fathers, brothers, mothers superior and sisters.

“The Church has always been near the army, because military service implies that people risk their life, and in order to do that, they need to be strong in spirit. From olden days, a soldier always had a priest near him. As long as that was the case, our army was invincible. Even in times of militant atheism, soldiers would come to priests in moments of greatest hardship, for the Church was always close to those who were ready to give their life for their Homeland, who were in deadly peril while defending their country.

“We need to be ready to keep supporting spiritually our Armed Forces and to foster faith in the soldiers who profess Orthodoxy, bringing them up in love for their Fatherland and loyal to their oath. And, most importantly, we ourselves must be up to the mark in our service to our country. By fulfilling our duty to the Homeland we at the same time fulfil the Divine commandment that calls us to love our neighbour. May our Lord strengthen us all in our service to Him, the Church and the Homeland!”