

# HIS BEATITUDE THEOPHILOS III SPEECH AT THE CELEBRATIONS IN MOSCOW IN THE PRESENCE OF H.H. PATRIARCH KIRILL.

20 November 2016

Your Holiness, dear Brother and Concelebrator of the Lord

Your Excellencies,

Your Eminences,

Your Graces,

Respected Members of the Government

*Christ is in our midst!*

We greet you Your Holiness, our dear Brother with the joy that comes from the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ in Jerusalem and we bring you the greeting of the Church of the Holy Land. On this auspicious occasion, we remember the words of the Psalmist, who wrote,

On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. (Ps. 22:10)

We celebrate many birthdays: physical birthdays, spiritual birthdays, the birthday of the Church. All birthdays are reminders to us of new life, of resurrection. Today we remember the 33 Martyrs of Miletene, and we recall that martyrdom is itself also a kind of heavenly birthday.

In the Gospel that we have read at today's Liturgy, we hear the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter. This miracle is nothing less than the re-birth of the young woman, and is a sign to us of our re-birth in Jesus Christ.

This great concelebration of the Divine Liturgy is yet another revelation of our new birth in Christ. In spite of our human weaknesses and shortcomings, we are spiritually reborn in this Eucharistic miracle. Every time we concelebrate the Divine Liturgy, our experience of Pentecost at Jerusalem is renewed, and on this occasion especially we rejoice in the deep unity of the Churches of Jerusalem and Russia.

As we give thanks to God today for so many things. "God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us has made us alive together with Christ (Eph: 2.4) and so we glorify the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ for the renewal of the Sacred Edicule of the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ. For, as Saint Paul says in the Epistle to the Ephesians, "God has destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will," and this adoption is itself a new birth. The restoration of the Sacred Edicule is itself another tangible sign of our unity, because while the Tomb itself is empty, the Tomb gives us new life, and the common Chalice that we share encrafts us into Christ's Body.

So the Eucharist makes the Church, and every time we partake of the Chalice, we experience our re-birth in Christ. Our concelebration of the Divine Liturgy with you, dear Brother, and with the other primates and brother bishops here, with the gathered

Clergy, monastics, and faithful, is yet a further visible expression of our sobornost – the true unity and synodality of the Church. This unity and synodality of the Church continue

to be vital and secure in the Holy Spirit.

On our behalf and on behalf of the Jerusalem Church, we take this blessed opportunity on this auspicious day to congratulate you, Your Holiness, and to wish you many years of primatial service in the Church. And we take this opportunity to express our gratitude to His Excellency the President for his staunch defense of the values of the Holy Bible over against the liberal values of many democracies, and we thank him especially for his support of the Church in the Holy Land in general and of the restoration of the Church of the Nativity in particular.

May God bless all the peoples of our beloved Russia, and may Cod grant peace and reconciliation in the Holy City of Jerusalem and throughout the Holy Land, which is our common home.

Mnogaya leta.

Spasiba

His Beatitude

**THEOPHILOS III**

Patriarch of Jerusalem