

ADDRESS OF HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM THEOPHILOS AT THE RUSSIAN ECCLESIASTICAL MISSION (MISSIA)

"Your Eminence Metropolitan Juvenalii,

Your Eminences,

Dear Archimandrite Alexander,

Reverend Fathers,

Beloved Monastics,

Sisters and Brothers in the Lord,

Christ is in our midst!

We gather today in this holy and venerable Cathedral to give thanks to the Almighty God for 170 years of faithful service and witness of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. Founded in 1847, the primary purpose of the Mission over the generations has been to support the many thousands of pilgrims who have come to the Holy Land from the Russian Church. Your witness here has endured many challenges both in the Holy Land and in your motherland, and yet you have endured. In particular we celebrate today the recent restoration of the Sergei Building of the Russian Compound to the Mission.

This Divine Liturgy that we have just concelebrated is the great and visible sign of the unity of the Holy Orthodox Church. The Eucharist is the expression of our unity in the

apostolic faith, but our sharing in the common Chalice runs even deeper than this. As St. Paul says of the Body of Christ, *if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it* (1 Cor. 12:26).

Together we share in each other's sufferings as well as in each other's joys. We in the Church of Jerusalem, which is the Mother of all Churches, have long had compassion for the many sufferings of the Russian Church over the generations, and we are particularly mindful in our own day of the painful schism that exists in Ukraine.

And we know that you have a special concern for the Church of Jerusalem and the Christian communities of the Holy Land, especially at this time when the Church in this region is facing new and difficult challenges.

So our unity in this Divine Liturgy finds its most profound expression in our mutual *diakonia*, our care of one for the other. We wish to express our profound gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Cyril, whose pastoral zeal for the Church of Jerusalem is well known. And we also wish to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency the President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin, whom we regard highly both as a defender of Orthodoxy and as a world leader, who has a particular care for peace and reconciliation in the Middle East in general and in the Holy City of Jerusalem in particular.

Our mutual support and care is what everybody expects from spiritual leaders in our day. Our Holy Orthodox Church is the witness that guarantees the identity and vitality of our Orthodox nations and communities. May this providential anniversary of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem strengthen our unity, so that we may, in our generation, give our best efforts together for the well-being of the Church, both at home and in our beloved Holy Land.

May God bless you all.”