## ASSEMBLY OF THE S.SYNOD OF THE HIERARCHY OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (3RD DAY OF HIS BEATITUDE'S VISIT IN RUSSIA)

On Saturday afternoon,, 19<sup>th</sup> November/2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017, the official Assembly of the Sacred Synod of the Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church took place at the Conference Hall of the Holy Church of the Saviour Christ, which included proceedings of three topics, monasticism, marriage, and internal Constitution of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

The Heads of the Churches around the world addressed the members of the Synod according to the order; The Ecumenical All-holy Patriarch through a conveyed Statement, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Alexandria in person [who offered as a gift the omophorion of the Patriarch of Alexandria Meletios Pigas, which he was wearing when he signed the legislation of the Patriarchal institution of the Moscow Patriarchate at the time of Job, Patriarch of Moscow], His Beatitude the Patriarch of Antioch John in person, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III in person. The address of His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem follows below;

"Your Beatitude Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Cyril,

Brother and co-celebrant of Our Mediocrity.

Having arrived in the bearer of Saints and much suffered land of Russia from the Holy City of Jerusalem, we convey to You and the Holy Synod of the beloved Archbishops with You, as well as to the crowds of our brotherly Orthodox Russians the timeless hopeful message of the incarnate Christ the Lord of glory, Who lived as God-man in Bethlehem and the humble land of Palestine. We bless our brothers and sisters in Christ, by the grace of the All-holy and Life-giving Holy Tomb.

Amidst the period of spiritual preparation for the forthcoming feasts of Christ's epiphany, towards which the holy hymn writer generously and gradually mystifies our minds and hearts, namely "the newest mystery of all new mysteries", the Incarnation of the Redeemer of the World, we feel that man's rebirth is primarily ensued through Via Dolorosa, as we commemorate in these sacred meetings of requiem and memory the recent harsh and onerous history of the Church of Russia. Moreover, the end of the Forty days of the Christmas fast, the Twelve-day festal period, coincides with the commemoration of martyrs such as the myriads of infants who were unjustly slaughtered by Herod for the name of the Lord, as well as that of Archdeacon Stephen the First Martyr, who during the martyrdom he suffered by his callous fellow citizens, saw the heavens open and the glorified Christ sitting at the right side of God the Father. The vision of the ineffable and uncreated light was the redemption for martyr Stephen. Similar divine visions of light were experienced by many new martyrs of the Russian nation in the recent years.

The martyrs' offenders ever failed to actually realize that our God is glorified by myriads of archangels and angels, and simultaneously by armies of martyrs, nor did they ever realize, that our God is made manifest on earth in the form of peace and good will among men. Martyrdom is central in the spiritual life; according to the Lord's beloved disciple John the Theologian, the martyrs "have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:14). "They stand before the throne of God, and serve him" boldly for all eternity (Rev. 7:15). The One that sitteth on the throne of Glory our God, protects His servants from "the heat of the

day" namely the wickedness and maliciousness of the "rulers and the principalities of this world" (Eph. 6:12), because "the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters" (Rev. 7:15-17). The martyrs beseech God that He may wipe out the wickedness of the world by His love, and that the Divine mercy, peace and righteousness of the God Who is beyond all visible, invisible and comprehensible things will prevail: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" (Rev. 6:10).

We glorify the worshiped in one Trinity God, because the prayers of the myriads of the new Russian martyrs, who have been not in the least inferior to the ancient ones, have liberated Your Church from tyranny and strengthened it, so that it marches towards the last times brightened and radiating with the glory of the Holy Saints according to the Lord's will.

The Church of Jerusalem glories especially, having being the womb of the martyrdom, because it was in Jerusalem that He Who "being in the form of God"... "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross", and the first to indicate the path of lifting the cross, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil.2:6-11).

According to the great master of monasticism and the Orthodox Doctrine Theodore the Stoudite, whose memory we celebrated only a few days ago, all beings and the whole of nature will kneel when sin will be abolished in the last day of judgment, precisely because sin lacks hypostasis "as it [sin] was nothing among the living things, but it existed and was

created by the free will of the doer [the person who had committed the sin]". At that time, only God's creatures will remain in existence, because they have a hypostasis, but sin will not, as it has no hypostasis. In addition, "the souls who have been led astray, having gone through all centuries without finding a place to stop, will come to God, Who has no limit, and then by realization and not by [spiritual] communication will they recover their strength, namely they will be restored to their ancient form and realize that God is not responsible for sin" (PG99, 1500D-1501B).

Such is the dominance of the glorified Lord, and such is the power of the plan of the ineffable Divine Providence. According to your native religious philosopher N. Berdyaev, the power of the kingdom of Spirit is elevated above this unmodified foundation against Caesar's kingdom. Many are the times throughout history, that the Church has witnessed the dominance of the kingdom of the Spirit. In this case, this is confirmed by the contemporary status of the brotherly Church of the Russian and other Orthodox Patriarchates and autocephalous Churches. The persecutions have ended and the Church has once more been highlighted as "gold in the crucible". Today the Orthodox Church is called again to bear witness to the truth in a secularized world which is being promoted by the Globalization. As it was recently noted in the Holy and Great Synod in Crete: "In these years of secularism, and in the face of the spiritual crisis which characterizes the contemporary civilization, the projection of the need to underline the importance of the holiness of life significant...The Orthodox tradition, shaped by practising the Christian truths, is the bearer of spiritual and ascetic morals, which should be highlighted and promoted especially in our era". All of us the Orthodox faithful owe to bear witness to the Gospel of Christ dynamically and in unity, thus becoming the "light of the world" and "the salt of the earth". A matter of prime importance for the faithful is to realize that the starting point of re-evangelizing people is precisely the unity and the respect towards the ecclesiastical ordinances, and especially of the ordinance of the Synod. According to the Apostolic tradition, the Synod of each Church is the ordained body by God, to guide the pastoral and missionary work.

Your Beatitude, Holy Brother,

We know by personal experience the sensitive Russian soul, witnessed by the thousands of pilgrims who visit the sacred shrines of the Holy Land every year. The Russian Orthodox faithful lay their deepest heart, often in tears, primarily before the Horrendous Golgotha and the All-holy and Lifegiving Tomb. The deep faith of these genuine faithful people leaves the Hagiotaphite Fathers ecstatic at times. The projection of our souls towards the All-merciful God in deep faith and patience draws His Mercy.

Therefore, we, both the clergy and the people are called, to imitate the Saints' example, in alignment with the timeless exhortation of the psalmist to each one of us: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14). This waiting on the Lord is the God-taught narrow path for the victory over sin and death, and at the same time the creative course towards the true theology, which the world needs greatly in order to glorify God.

To Him all glory and power unto the ages of ages. Amen."

His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem also expressed His gratitude towards the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril and the President Mr. Putin for their support to the Jerusalem Patriarchate in our efforts to preserve the Status Quo of the Old City of Jerusalem and to protect the Christians of the Holy Land and the Middle East. Likewise there were addresses by the following; His Beatitude the Patriarch of Georgia

Elijah by a representative, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Serbia Eirinaios, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Romania Daniel, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Bulgaria Neophytos, His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostom, His Beatitude the Archbishop of Albania Anastasios, His Beatitude the Metropolitan of Warsaw and all Poland Savvas, His Beatitude the Archbishop of the Czech Republic and Slovakia Svatislav, His Beatitude the Metropolitan of America and Canada Tikhon in person.

After the addresses by all the aforementioned Hierarchs, His Beatitude the Patriarch of Moscow Cyril thanked each and every one of the Heads of the Orthodox Churches and the Hierarchs of the Russian Church for their contribution in underlining the role of the Confessor and Hieromartyr Patriarch St. Tikhon in the reconstitution of the Patriarchal institution of the Russian Church, and declared the termination of the Assembly proceedings.

## From Secretariat-General

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