

**EMBRACING UNITY: H.B.
THEOPHILOS III'S LETTER TO
H.H. KIRILL STRESSES
IMPORTANCE OF UNITY, AND
EXTENDS DEVOTIONS ON HIS
HOLINESS BIRTHDAY AT THE HOLY
TOMB OF JESUS CHRIST**



No. 669

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill
Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia
Moscow
RUSSIA

Your Holiness, dear Brother and Fellow Concelebrant in the Lord,

On the happy occasion of your birthday celebrations, we greet you from the Holy City of Jerusalem, and we wish to extend our warmest fraternal best wishes to you. It is a sadness to us that we cannot join in these celebrations in person so that we might enjoy together the full expression of the unity and communion that we share in the Divine Liturgy.

As you are fully aware, we face a most difficult ongoing situation here where our people are enduring tremendous hardship and violence, and this prevents us from being with you. However, we shall offer a devotion for you at the Holy Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even as we do our utmost to support and to minister to our people here, we are committed to our spiritual mission to uphold the unity of the Orthodox Church and to do all in our power to contribute to the healing of the unhappy divisions that exists between our Orthodox sisters and brothers in Russia and Ukraine. We are grateful to you for the encouragement in this process that you gave after our recent announcement in September and we further appreciate your support echoed in the October meeting of the representatives of Russia's religious communities. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has always had a special concern for the unity of the Church, and has acted across the ages when the need was calling. We shall be devoted in our efforts to continue this legacy and to uphold in every possible way the journey of reconciliation that we started in Amman, with care and accommodation to all our fellow Orthodox primates.

May the Prince of Peace, whose Nativity in the Holy Grotto of Bethlehem we are preparing now to celebrate, strengthen you in your primatial ministry, and may he bring lasting peace and reconciliation to our beloved Holy Land and to our Holy Orthodox Church in every part of the world.

With fraternal love in Christ.

THEOPHILOS III
Patriarch of Jerusalem

Holy City of Jerusalem
Monday, November 20th, 2023