

**MESSAGE**  
**of Patriarch KIRILL of Moscow and All Russia, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the feat of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church during the seizure of church property.**

**Beloved in the Lord Archpastors, honourable Fathers, monks and nuns,  
dear brothers and sisters!**

These days, when we prayerfully remember the feat of the New Martyrs and Confessors of the Russian Church, revealed by our glorious predecessors in the time of fierce challenges, I address you all with words of an apostolic greeting: *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus, our Lord* (2 Peter 1, 2).

A hundred years ago, in the whirlwind of post-revolutionary changes, the theomachists found, as they thought, a suitable excuse to launch a powerful anti-religious campaign: under the pretext of raising funds for the needs of the starving Volga region and other regions of the country, the forcible seizure of church property began, accompanied by repressions of the clergy, monastics and laity. Lawlessness and arbitrariness, trampling and desecration of shrines soon became widespread.

Under conditions of the most severe persecution, in February 1922, St. Tikhon, Patriarch of All Russia, addressed all the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church with a special message, in which he testified to the active efforts that the Church is making to support the population suffering from hunger. In addition to appeals to the leaders of some Christian denominations to help with money and food, with the blessing of St. Tikhon, a special church committee was founded, and donations collection was organized in all churches.

Moreover, taking into account the scale of the disaster, the Patriarch allowed "*to donate precious church decorations and objects, that do not have liturgical use, for the needs of the starving.*" The only thing, that the Primate could not agree with, was the removal from churches of "*sacred objects, the use of which for other than liturgical purposes is prohibited by the canons of the Ecumenical Church and punished by Her as sacrilege*" (Message of Patriarch Tikhon on helping the starving and seizing church valuables, February 15/28, 1922).

However, despite the clearly stated and well-founded position of Patriarch Tikhon, forcible seizures continued. It suffices to recall the events that took place in March 1922 in Shuya in order to understand what the new government's attitude towards the Church really was. Machine-gun fire was opened on the crowd of people who stood up to defend the trampled shrines. Alas, the persecution of believers did not end with this atrocity.

The theomachists did not hide the fact that they see the final and speedy reprisal against the Russian Orthodox Church as their main goal. And today, a hundred years later, one cannot read the terrible lines of the directive without shudder: “The more representatives of the reactionary clergy ... we manage to shoot on this occasion, the better ... so that for several decades they will not even dare to think about any resistance.” Not the concern for the starving people, but hellish malice and hatred for the Church moved the godless builders of the new Russia.

In the course of the campaign to confiscate church valuables, in the first half of 1922 alone, the Bolsheviks provoked more than 1,400 cases of bloody clashes, which were accompanied by arrests, show trials, executions, imprisonment and exile.

In these persecutions and sufferings for the name of Christ, thousands of church children showed an example of strong faith and spiritual steadfastness, patience and courage, they accepted martyrdom and *shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away* (1 Pet. 5:4). Now they stand before the Throne of the Almighty God, offering prayers for the Russian Church, for our earthly Fatherland, for the countries and peoples belonging to the Orthodox tradition.

Reflecting on the causes of the tragic events of the 20th century, we testify that all attempts to build a bright future without God are doomed to failure, and therefore cannot give people the much-desired happiness and prosperity. *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain* (Ps. 126:1). One has to be blind not to see this main lesson of the past century.

Remembering the past, conducting a saving ministry in the present, the Church is looking forward to the glorious Second Coming of Christ, when, according to the words of the Holy Scripture, *God may be all in all* (1 Cor. 15:28), *when God shall wipe away all tears from human eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away* (Rev. 21:4).

In the meantime, remaining on earth and *let us run with patience the race that is set before us* (Heb. 12:1), let us strive to live according to the Gospel commandments, pray fervently and work without laziness, *turn away from evil and do good* (Ps. 33:15), *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. 4:3).

*May the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus, so that with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. 15:5-6). Amen.

**+KIRILL**

**PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA**