



Patriarch Kirill: Immediately End the Bloodletting

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I appeal now to the Fullness of our Church, to all the peoples of historic Rus.

There can be nothing more important for us today than the continuing fratricide which is blazing on the territory of Ukraine, taking away more and more lives.

What is happening today, primarily in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts, and how are the members of our Holy Church, to assess it?

In the southern regions of historic Rus, internecine strife has now flared up.

The consequences of the bloody conflict are horrifying. No longer only a hundred, like in Kiev over the winter, but many, many hundreds have died, thousands have been wounded and left homeless. Only the devil can celebrate victory, when brothers take up arms against each other, destroy each other, maim each other, weaken the life-force of the people.

And of course, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Church of the spiritually indivisible Rus, cannot divide the united people of God along political, national, social or any other principle. The Church fulfills the mission entrusted to her by the Lord Jesus Christ, and not the instructions or orders from elsewhere, from one political force or another. That is how she differs from some nominally religious but in actuality worldly organizations.

Internecine battles have occurred more than once in our history. They caused the weakening of Kievan Rus and to the fall of the divided principalities under the assault of Khan Baty, they led to the terrible Time of Troubles in the Russian state in the seventeenth century, to the monstrous, elemental bloodletting and establishment for many years of the godless regime in the twentieth century.

The lessons of history also show that internecine struggle always gives rise to the defeat of the Fatherland by outside forces. Both in the days of old and today, we face the danger of losing true sovereignty of the people. Sovereignty which is expressed in the possibility and ability to arrange one's life on the basis of those moral, spiritual and cultural values which were adopted, together with Divine grace, by our ancestors in the Kievan font of the Baptism of Rus, which blossomed and were made our own over the course of many centuries of our history.

I appeal to all who are in a position to make decisions: immediately end the bloodletting, enter into real discussions for establishing peace and justice. There can be no winners in fratricidal war, there can be no political victory more valuable than human lives.

As far as the Church is concerned, her weapon and her shield are prayer and the Word of God, which "is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12).

I call upon all the flock of the Russian Orthodox Church to enhanced prayer, to extra zeal in observing the Lenten period of the Holy Apostles which now begins. A special call to the monasteries: pray now to the Lord as our pious ancestors were able to pray in the days of strife; the ascetics of Russian monasticism, SS



Anthony and Theodosius of the Kievan Caves, how they prayed for the end of hateful enmity in the world, the peacemaker of the Russian lands, St Sergius of Radonezh, how St Tikhon, Patriarch of All Russia, called to the Lord during the bloody chaos and civil war, as did Holy Hieromartyr Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev.

May special prayers for peace and the overcoming of internecine war tirelessly be made in all our churches, the text of which I gave my blessing today.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia