



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HIS HOLINESS KIRILL
PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND OF ALL RUSSIA
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ENTHRONEMENT***

*To His Holiness Kirill
Patriarch of Moscow and of All Russia*

I greet Your Holiness with joy as you undertake the great responsibility of shepherding the venerable Russian Orthodox Church. I readily recall the good will which characterized our meetings at the time of your service as President of the Department of External Church Relations. On the occasion of your enthronement I wish, therefore, to reaffirm my esteem and my spiritual closeness. I pray that our heavenly Father will grant you the abundant gifts of the Holy Spirit in your ministry and enable you to guide the Church in the love and peace of Christ.

You are now the successor of our beloved brother of revered memory, His Holiness Alexy II, who left his people a deep and abiding inheritance of ecclesial renewal and development, as he led the Russian Orthodox Church out of the long and difficult period of suffering under the totalitarian and atheistic system to a new, active presence and service in today's society. Patriarch Alexis II worked assiduously for the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church and for communion with the other Orthodox Churches. He likewise maintained a spirit of openness and cooperation with other Christians, and with the Catholic Church in particular, for the defence of Christian values in Europe and in the world. I am certain that Your Holiness will continue to build on this solid foundation, for the good of your people and for the benefit of Christians everywhere.

As President of the Department of External Church Relations, you yourself played an outstanding role in forging a new relationship between our Churches, a relationship based on friendship, mutual acceptance and sincere dialogue in facing the difficulties of our common journey. It is my earnest hope that we will continue to cooperate in finding ways to foster and strengthen communion in the Body of Christ, in fidelity to our Saviour's prayer that all may be one, so that the

world may believe (cf. *Jn* 17:21).

Conscious of the enormous responsibilities which accompany the spiritual and pastoral ministry to which the Holy Spirit has called you, I renew to Your Holiness the assurance of my prayers and fraternal good will. I ask Almighty God to bless you with his love, to watch over the beloved Russian Church, and to sustain the Bishops, priests and all the faithful in the unfailing hope which is ours in Christ Jesus.

From the Vatican, 28 January 2009

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