

Ilarion, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations Moscow Patriarchate

27th International Ecumenical Conference on Orthodox Spirituality

CALLED TO LIFE IN CHRIST

In the Church, in the world, in the present time

Monastery of Bose, 4-6 September 2019?

in collaboration with the Orthodox Churches

Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations Moscow Patriarchate

Right Reverend and Dear Father Enzo Bianchi,

Dear Organizers and Participants of the Symposium:

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, I cordially greet all the participants of the 27th International Symposium on Orthodox Spirituality, organized by the Bose monastic community on the theme "Calling to Life in Christ".

The Son of God, the Savior of the world, through His incarnation, sacrifice on the cross and resurrection, laid the foundation for a new life, hence all who believe in Him become partakers of it. According to St. Paul, in the "new Adam" mankind is healed from the plague of sin and gets access to the Kingdom of God: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (I Cor. 15:47-49). Testifying to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit sent by Christ to His disciples, the very same Apostle Paul writes in the Epistle to the Galatians: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).?A Christian becomes "A new creation in Christ" (see Gal. 6:15), though by the grace of God, but not without personal effort. This "synergy" of the Divine grace and human will is realized in the Church of Christ as in a divine-human organism, and, therefore, received the name "life in Christ" from the Church Fathers. It is not a coincidence that some prominent Christian ascetics gave their mystagogical or ascetic writings precisely this title. We may certainly recall the wonderful work of St. Nicolaus Cabasilas "The Life in Christ" or the spiritual diary of St. John of Kronstadt "My Life in Christ".

The call to renew the life of the world in Christ Jesus never loses its relevance, and in some historical epochs it becomes especially important. Our era can be attributed to such an epoch as well – the time of divisions among Christians, conflicts among nations, acute social injustice and the global environmental crisis. In the Joint Declaration signed by Pope Francis and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill following a historic meeting in Havana on February 12th, 2016, the Primates of the two largest Christian Churches reminded the world of the universal calling for life in Christ, in which all divisions are overcome, wounds, caused by hostility and misunderstanding, are healed, unity in love is achieved: "Christ is the well-spring of joy and hope. Faith in Him transfigures human life, fills it with meaning. This is the conviction borne of the experience of all those to whom Peter refers in his words: "Once you were 'no people' but now you are God's people; you 'had not received mercy' but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet 2:10) (p. 29). Pointing to the need to unite the efforts of the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox Christians in proclaiming the Gospel of salvation, the Pope and the Patriarch emphasize: "This world, in which the spiritual pillars of human existence are progressively disappearing, awaits from us a compelling Christian witness in all spheres of personal and social life. Much of the future of humanity will depend on our capacity to give shared witness to the Spirit of truth in these difficult times" (p. 28).

May the current symposium, in which representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches, the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant communities are partaking, remind us with renewed vigor about our common Christian calling and the need for joint work in preaching the Gospel of Christ to the modern world.

?Let the coming days be fruitful and may God's blessings be upon you.

Respectfully yours in Christ,

Chairman of the
Department for External Church Relations
Moscow Patriarchate
Metropolitan of Volokolamsk
+ HILARION