To His Holiness, Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and of all Russia

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To His Holiness, Pimen, Patriarch of Moscow and of all Russia.

Your Holiness!

Zeal towards the Church, alarm as to its fate, belief in the Church’s conciliarism and the sense of responsibility felt by every Christian for the Church’s historical direction, prompt us to address you with this letter.

This appeal is the result of long deliberations, serious meditations and numerous discussions with those whose hearts are gripped with sorrow over the disastrous situation of Mother Church.

We have long waited and hoped that the words we are uttering now would be said to you by the archpastors close to you. However, their voices are not being heard.

Therefore, we are compelled, as difficult as it is, to tell you the truth, Your Holiness. The truth, which is being whispered by the laymen in the Church; the truth which is being overheard in the hallways of Church consistories and in the offices of Soviet bureaucrats. The truth which consists of the fact that You, Your Holiness, are so weakened by ailments, that you are not in any condition to carry the burden of patriarchal service.

Today, on the eve of the Great Anniversary of the Millennium of a Baptized Russian unprecedented changes have been outlined and began to take place in our homeland. The atheistic government, after having subjected religion and the believers to persecution without precedent in history, is changing its attitude towards Christians. It would be inexcusable not to take this unique opportunity for the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Church is faced with the necessity of solving a large variety of difficult and important problems. The role of the Patriarch is paramount.

During the period of the late 50s and early 60s, nearly 15 thousand churches and more than 50 monastaries were closed in our country. Now the time has come to restore what was lost.

We are short of clergymen. The Ukraine lost its old Kievan Religious Academy and Seminary. There are no religious schools in Byelorussia, and beyond the Urals for thousands of kilometers there isn’t a single seminary nor a single monastery.

During the time when the Churches were being closed the number of eparchies also decreased. They formed artificial associations and as a result the same bishop administers several eparchies. The Metropolitan of Leningrad, for example, in addition administers Estonian, Novgorodian and Ononets eparchies; we see the same situation in Odessa and Donets eparchies.
There is only one bishop administering four Central Asian republics. In the Kirghis deanery alone there are nearly 20 Churches which for years were not being visited by any clergy of a higher order.

The diocesan conference dealing with the problems of intrachurch life are not taking place. The clergy in the provinces are separated from the people and each other. The clergy of parishes and laymen are without any regular contact with their local bishop.

There is a pressing necessity to expand the publishing activities of the Moscow Patriarchate. Aside from a need to significantly increase the number of editions of Holy Scripture, it is essential to publish the works of the Church Fathers, writing on loving kindness as well as Christian and edifying writings, theoretical (academic) commentaries on the Bible and books on preaching, missionary dogmatic and apologetic topics.

There is hope that the antidemocratic religious legislation of 1929 will be repealed. It is necessary for the Patriarch to assist energetically in this process.

As paradoxical as it might seem, today it is the State, not the Church, that has to take the initiative to involve the believers in the social life of society. Our society is going through a spiritual crisis and it is the Russian Orthodox Church, in particular, that can perform a significant role in bringing it to a healthy state. However, this potential role remains unfulfilled.

A heavy burden of spiritual and historical responsibility is being put on the shoulders of the High Priest. Such a burden, Your Holiness, is beyond Your strength. Soon an Assembly of the Russian Orthodox Church will take place—a festive celebration of the Great Church Anniversary which will be attended by very important delegations. The Patriarch is not only the champion of Orthodox Christians in front of God, he is also the symbol of the spiritual condition of the Orthodox Church. How will this symbol be perceived by those who are concerned about our Church?

Your illness plays into the hands of those who do not wish genuine recovery of the Church, society and state.

There are known instances in the Church history of Russia and Byzantium when the bishops and even patriarchs left their office for the good of the Church. We would like to recall a not so distant example - Patriarch Maksim of Vselensk retired because of health and thus granted the Church the opportunity to elect archbishop Afinagor to the patriarchal throne.

Your Holiness, the well-being of the Church is an essential goal for every Christian. We trust that for You, the High Priest of the Russian Church, the best interests of the Church have the highest priority of Your Holiness.

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