

JUBILEE EPISTLE
of His Eminence
HILARION,
Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York,
First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad,
on the Occasion of the 800th Anniversary of the Birth
of the Holy Right-Believing Great Prince Alexander Nevsky
and the Centennial of the I All-Diaspora Council

Greeting my beloved in the Lord brother-archpastors, reverend fathers, and our dear brothers and sisters with love and a feeling of rejoicing in the Mother of God, I sincerely congratulate all of the archpastors, clergy, and laity with both the approaching celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the birth of the Great Prince Alexander Nevsky and the centennial of the I All-Diaspora Council!

What exclamations are befitting for this jubilee year? Of course, the exclamations of the lips of us sinners are by themselves insufficient to worthily glorify the labors and memory of the Great Prince Alexander and the good vinedressers of Christ's Vineyard in Serbia, who 100 years ago offered a warm canonical haven to the Most Blessed Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev & Galicia, the archpastors, pastors, and flock of the Russian Church Abroad, and blessed them with the venerable hands of the Eminent members of the Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, which met at the end of August 1921, to secure their ecclesiastical life beyond the borders of Russia and pastorally nourish the Russian refugees.

In this special year of the 800th anniversary of the birth of the Holy Right-Believing Alexander, that wise diplomat and ruler, and the centennial of the I All-Diaspora Council – which took place from November 21 to December 2, 1921, in Sremski Karlovci – the Russian Orthodox people living in the Diaspora are called to augmented prayer, the doing of good deeds in all respects, and a private examination of the tablets of history, so that, by drawing from it much-needed strength and inspiration, they might continue in fortitude and renewal of spirit the patient bearing of their life's cross. We celebrate anniversaries in our lives and honor the jubilee celebrant; so must we also unite ourselves in one common assembly and with great zeal confirm ourselves in Holy Orthodoxy, by no means shaming the memory of the Venerable Prince and of our ever-memorable forebears in the Diaspora, or the honor of our dear Mother – the Local Russian Orthodox Church.

Calling to remembrance the austere and arduous life of the Right-Believing Alexander, whom the chronicler lauded as “merciful beyond measure,” and the blessings bestowed by God through him, let us gather in spirit around this holy warrior for Orthodoxy, in order to honor his holy memory, remember his life, and learn and spread his legacy. May his name be on the lips and in the hearts of all, from the coming summer celebrations (August 30/September 12) to his winter feast day (November 23/December 6). Let us make a vow before his sacred icon to preserve, according to the measure of our meager strengths, the Faith of our fathers, the Church, and our nationality as gifts from God.

Commemorating the multitude of Russian Orthodox people who found themselves in foreign lands and finding there a place of rest, I offer a deep bow of gratitude to His Holiness, Patriarch Porfirije, and the Serbian Orthodox Church which he heads, and with which we have shared fathers and preceptors, as the ever-memorable Metropolitan Amfilohije (Radović; +2020) of Montenegro & the Littoral expressed when he addressed the IV All-Diaspora Council in 2006. Our Churches are connected with truly fraternal bonds, a fact attested to by the special relationships between the hierarchs, clergy, and faithful of our peoples.

The Most Holy Patriarch Varnava (Rosić; +1937) of Serbia often attended various Russian gatherings, memorial evenings, and émigré celebrations, but he always paid special attention to the “Society for the Care of the Spiritual Needs of Russians.” In his address at his Patriarchal enthronement, he said: “We, celebrating the glory of our Church, our Patriarchate, must remember that the Russian Church participated with us today in the person of His Eminence, Metropolitan Anthony, the great theologian. I bequeath you to commemorate the Orthodox Russian people, which is suffering, persecuted by the antichrist.” Regarding the elevation of the Most Holy Patriarch Varnava to the Primatial Throne, Metropolitan Anthony, in addition to all of his other statements, also wrote: “His mind and heart contain within themselves the positive influences of Yugoslavia, Russia, and Greece. I was well acquainted with him during my time as Archbishop of Kharkov; we lived in one apartment together, and we performed the divine services regularly, alternating one after the other.” Archpriest Peter Belovidov, who enjoyed the love and respect of both Russians and Serbs in Belgrade, once presented the Most Holy Patriarch Varnava a white klobuk after Divine Liturgy in one of the Russian churches, saying: “Accept, Most Holy Master, this white klobuk as a sign of the sincere dedication and noble love of the Russians.” In response, His Holiness clarified that the white klobuk is the attire of Russian metropolitans, the color of which symbolizes purity, while the diamond cross is the cross of the sufferings of the Russian Church.

Remembering with love the historic path of the Russian Church Abroad and the cherished names of the holy fathers we share with the Serbian Orthodox Church – the Most Holy Patriarchs Dimitrije and Varnava of Serbia, the Most Blessed Metropolitans Anthony and Anastassy, the Holy Hierarchs John (Maximovitch), Nikolaj (Velimirović), and Mardarije (Uskoković), Venerable Justin (Popović), Schema-Archimandrite Ambrose (Kurganov), and many others, I humbly ask all of you to fervently pray for the salvation of the Christ-loving and cross-bearing brother-nations of Russia and Serbia, “whose faith follow” (Heb. 13:7).

I call on all of our clergy, parishioners, and worshippers to mark this time with all manner of good deeds. Let each one add his participation to the celebrated jubilees, be that by donating his labors, time, or resources to the parish church, to the monasteries, to the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad or other Church institutions, to support our elderly, to educate our children in parish schools, or to church-social organizations that do important work with our youth. Let everyone take an interest in the deep wealth of our history. Let everyone turn regularly in prayer to the Great Prince Alexander and ask his help and intercession, at the same time remembering the departed founders of the Russian Church Abroad, who defended Orthodoxy in the most trying of circumstances. Their gazes are directed at us, their legacy is on our shoulders, and thus we have an obligation to undertake this labor. All of this will be the glorification according to each one’s ability of the great commander of the Neva, and according to our zeal the worthy attentiveness owed to these sacred jubilees.

May we be aided in this by the Most Blessed Virgin Theotokos, who “in her dormition forsaketh us not.” Amen.

Asking your holy prayers, I remain yours with love in the Lord,

+HILARION

Metropolitan of Eastern America & New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia
Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos 2021 A.D.