

## **PATRIARCHAL GREETING**

To the participants in the Diocesan Youth Conference "My Life in Christ"  
Boston, MA, July 12 - 17, 2011

Beloved in the Lord spiritual children,

We greet you with fatherly love on the occasion of your diocesan youth conference in Boston, MA.

We praise you for keeping this annual tradition of gathering in various diocesan churches at the same time as the diocesan convention and the meeting of the popadias and diaconesses.

We assure you that unity in the name of the Lord gives you the power to truly experience unforgettable moments in the common prayer and the promised presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in your lives. We are gladdened by your readiness, despite the great distances and big expense in this time of universal economic crisis, to be gathered again in Boston together with your loved spiritual counselor Fr. Philip Tolbert. We gave a blessing to your diocesan Metropolitan Joseph to elevate him during the convention with the title "Archpriest" and we anticipate that all of you will say "Dostoen!"

We are pleased to notify you as our spiritual children that 2011 is a memorable year for the history of our church. On April 4th, we, together with the Holy Synod, canonized the new martyrs of Novo Selo and of Batak who were slaughtered by the Turks for our faith in 1876. Their memory will be celebrated in May each year: on May 9th we will celebrate the feast of the martyrs of Novo Selo; and on May 17, the feast of the martyrs of Batak. They became worthy. They refused to put on their heads the turban and did not accept Islam, but through their Orthodox faith they were made worthy of the halo of sanctity.

All of these new martyrs believed in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ without having seen Him and therefore they did not fear the Turkish sword.

As you begin your conference, we would like to call your enlightened attention to these questions: Do you know yourselves well, do you doubt your faith as young Orthodox Christians, and do you turn your faith into works?

The ancient Greeks advised: "Know thyself!" This aphorism is absolutely necessary for each one of us. If you do not know yourselves, you will not be able to trust in yourselves and you will not be able to turn your faith into works because it will not be a living faith. To those who are not confident in themselves the apostle Peter writes: "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." (2 Peter 2:17) The spiritual condition of these people cannot be transformed into fruitful activity or a positive expression of life. The holy apostle James writes as well: "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." (James 1:8) There cannot be any good activity where two forces oppose each other

and destroy each other. You cannot have two souls and two hearts which fight each other for the right to act. He who is double-minded is powerless in the more elevated desires and goals. He does not have high ideals. That is why he is unsettled even in his daily life.

And you have gathered in Boston with high ideals, which you must strive to achieve in the future. That means that you must believe in God, in God's word, and in the witness of those who have experience and deserve your trust. Always keep before your eyes and imitate the faith of your three heavenly patrons: St. John the Theologian, St. John of Rila, and St. John of Kronstadt. Then your life will truly be in Christ. Then your experience in the faith will also be real because you will understand its essence by examining yourselves. The ancient prophet Zephaniah also advises: "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together" (Zephaniah 2:1) To "gather yourselves together" means to know your true spiritual and moral condition so that you may reach your calling. The prophet continues: "Seek ye the Lord..., seek righteousness, seek meekness." (Zeph. 2:3)

This is what we too require from you, the youth: "Gather yourselves together", with care and sobriety, with wise mercilessness towards yourselves, with sincerity and with desire to obey the law of God and to know from experience which is the "good, acceptable, and perfect" (Romans 12:2) will of God.

*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." (Gal. 6: 18)*

+ Patriarch Maxim