



MARK,
Archbishop of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain

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Munich, 12/25 July 2011

To all Priests and Deacons of the German and British Dioceses
and in the Holy Land

Reverend Fathers,

On 11 September 2011 the world remembers a very sad date – the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack in New York, when a multitude of innocent people perished. This attack, together with the others that followed it, was a clear sign of the brazen presence of evil, iniquity and hatred among us. It also showed how defenseless we are in this world. It is also clear that a naked lust for power and cynical political calculation lurk behind contemporary terrorist attacks. The events in Beslan which brought the German Diocese into close contact with the victims of extremists once more showed us and the whole world the extent of human degradation when people become fanatical in the name of an ideology, whether religious, nationalist or political. Today, people often hide behind a faith in a god, but in reality they have lost all reverence for God and as a result they have no respect for humanity. Once deprived of communion with God, human beings degenerate into haters of humanity.

We belong to the only Church which was created by the Saviour. This means that we have no right to hate, to have an arrogant attitude to others or to despise their beliefs. To belong to the true, apostolic and catholic, Church of Christ obliges us to live according to the Gospel commandments with our whole heart and to set others examples of true Christian life. The living truth of Christ reveals our own sins and failings to us. We repent in purity of heart of the bad example of Gospel life that we give the world. We can draw others to the truth of Christ by sincere repentance, by transfiguring our hearts, but not at all by exalting ourselves or condemning others.

In the countries which make up our two dioceses, as also in Russia, a wave of militant Islam and other militant ideologies of all hues, from Fascist to pseudo-liberal, is unfurling. But in my view, indifference to our own faith and to the beliefs of others conceals a no lesser danger than the fanaticism, cynicism and

depravity of others. We Orthodox must be rooted in our own faith and traditions, be filled with Christ and His love, and not merely carry out some outward and even little understood rituals. We must all learn to heed our hearts, to heed God, to enter into the spirit of prayer as well as the words and thoughts of our neighbours. How often we walk past the sorrows and joys of our neighbours, without showing any sympathy. In so doing, we forget that those who are incapable of heeding their neighbours cannot heed themselves either, they are unable to hear the call of their hearts and of God in their hearts, in their consciences. They do not understand what is going on in their own hearts. This is the first thing we have to learn. Only then will we be able to show love and respect towards others, entering into their lives, the lives of those who were created by God, and hope that the Lord will bring other people to such an understanding of life, which is His holy gift.

Although 11 September falls on a Sunday this year, it is nevertheless a fast day because St John the Baptist, who loved God so ardently, was unjustly executed then. The Saviour said that demons can only be driven out by prayer and fasting.

I am asking all the clergy of our Dioceses to insert special petitions into the litanies on this day and, wherever they are able, to address themselves to their flocks with words in the spirit of what has been written above.

With love in Christ, I remain your

+ Archbishop Mark

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