



# The Sermon of His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill after the Divine Liturgy in the Kursk Root Hermitage

This homily was reproduced for the official website of St. Nicholas and St. George  
Churches of the Kuban Cossack Voisko Abroad in New Jersey  
from the website [patriarchia.ru](http://patriarchia.ru)



St. Sergius of Radonezh Publishing House  
St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church  
Red Bank, New Jersey, USA

2009

## **A Sermon of the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church After the Divine Liturgy in the Kursk Root Hermitage**

*On September 24, the day of the afterfeast of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, His Holiness Kyrill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, led the festivities in honor of the visit of the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God “of the Sign” to the Kursk Root Hermitage. Upon completion of the Divine Liturgy in the newly consecrated Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, His Holiness, Patriarch Kyrill, addressed the festivities’ participants with the following archpastoral sermon.*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

Today is a great and joyous event for our whole land, for our whole people. The miraculous icon “of the Sign,” which during times of great trials left our Homeland and became a guiding light for the whole Russian Diaspora, has once more returned to the Kursk Root Hermitage. Until October 2, the faithful can pray with tears before this icon in the place of its original appearance. After this, this icon will return once more to the Russian Diaspora, to be a spiritual bulwark for all Orthodox people, who by various circumstances came to life far from Russia, so that before this holy icon prayers might be offered up for our country, for our Church, and for our people.

Today, when I entered this monastery and looked at its reborn beauty bathed in sunlight, when the miraculous Kursk Icon “of the Sign” was taken under the domes of this church, I was suddenly struck by this thought: “But what does this all mean? Why did this church have to be destroyed, this monastery torn apart, this holy icon chased out, when everything has returned to its place and the monastery shines once more with its original beauty and the holy miraculous icon is here? What was it that occurred in the life of our nation, and what took place between the destruction of this monastery and its recreation?” This is a mystery of God’s Providence, and we can make out only a small portion of the meaning of this mystery.

But what also surprised me today was the daily reading from the Epistle, which fell on this day. What startling words we hear in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, in the verses of the first chapter: God made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him (Eph. 1:9-10).

And, it would seem, this is but a coincidental alignment: the consecration of the Church of the Nativity in the Root Hermitage, the triumph of the resurrection of this national holy place, the return of this miraculous icon to the place of its appearance and glorification – all of this unites with the great words of the Apostle, that in Christ is made clear His mystery of the dispensation of the fulness of times, that fulness of times, wherein all in heaven and on earth will be gathered together under Christ. Of course,

the Apostle had in mind the fulness of existence in God's Kingdom. However, he writes not only of God's Kingdom, but of human history, as well. And his words must teach all of us, especially our nation, which committed the grave sin of apostasy, the mystery of God's will for the dispensation of the fulness of times. What this mystery really means, is that the fulness of times and the fulness of human life will arrive only then, when the divine will unite with the human, when the heavenly will unite with the earthly.

We know that at some moment in our history our people wished to separate the heavenly from the earthly, to turn away from the heavenly, to defile and desecrate their own holy places, to throw off the crosses from the golden domes, to demolish the churches and expunge the word of God from their lives, thinking that then they would be free and happy, that they would liberate their might, and relying on their own wisdom and human might, they would build this fulness of times without anything heavenly, underpinned solely by the earthly. We know that none of this succeeded. And we may say with some certainty that the Lord allowed the demolition of churches, the desecration of holy places, the spilling of the blood of martyrs, and the sufferings of a whole people not so that the beginning and end might be connected by meaningless logic, but that our people – and, perhaps, through their long-suffering, the whole world – might see the Divine logic of creation, the mystery of God's will for the dispensation of the fulness of times.

And for us this path we walked was not in vain. We were able to expiate our guilt before God, expiate our sin of apostasy by sufferings, by blood, by misfortunes, and by weathering mighty blows. We had a chance to consider and reevaluate much; and at some point the Lord, and only He, for no human might take part in it, superseded His wrath by His mercy on the day of His Transfiguration, and more than seventy years of godless imprisonment ceased. And though the succeeding years were full of many evils, they contained perhaps the most important thing: the striving of the people to the rebirth of their faith. Therefore we do not call these difficult years a time of troubles, for troubles in Russia have always been coupled with the destruction of Her holy places. Yet this difficult time, with its frenzy and insanity, nevertheless was imbued with that which proved to be the most important thing in this very new time of our nation's history: the gradual conversion of the people to God.

And the result of this conversion was the restoration of God's churches, the rebirth of our holy places, the unification of the heavenly and the earthly; not fully, of course, as very often the heavenly is overshadowed by our sinful earthly, but nonetheless, the people are turning their gaze back toward the holy places they once tore asunder, and which are now being restored by the efforts and prayers of our people. And they are being restored not out of wealth or an abundance of resources, but in times of crisis and economic catastrophe. And nothing can stop the will of our people to restore these holy

places, for through this the spiritual life of the people is restored, and the heavenly is united with the earthly under Christ.

Yet another important lesson may be drawn from this narrative of terrible destruction and miraculous restoration. By this tragic history, our people have received such an injection of faith, that no temptations, not even the most terrible forces, can overcome it. God forgave us for turning away from Him, and today we see this forgiveness with our own eyes. And the Queen of Heaven, appearing in our land through Her miraculous icon "of the Sign," once more bears witness to the beginning of a national life uniting the heavenly and the earthly.

Let us remember all of it: the terrible tragedy that befell our people, the national apostasy and insensibility, the sufferings and torments, the rebirth of a nation by the wonder and might of God. Let our consciousness, our will, and our senses be imbued with this historic experience, so that we may never, under any circumstances, repeat our past, but with humility and in obedience to the will of God, opened to us through His Son, walk the historic path that God has chosen for Holy Russia, preserving the faith in our heart and establishing a life on this earth, in which the heavenly and the earthly are united under Christ.

I would like to sincerely thank you, Your Eminence, dear Metropolitan Hilarion, the episcopate of the Russian Church Abroad, comprising now an inseparable piece of our one Russian Orthodox Church, for the joy we have today in praying before the miraculous icon "of the Sign" in this reborn monastery. Archbishop Herman correctly noted that there is some great symbolic significance in that the icon "of the Sign" is here today. A Sign is the evidence of a miracle, a witness to Divine might. That is what "Sign" means in our Church lexicon, and we accept as evidence of a miracle and of God's mercy the presence today of the icon "of the Sign" in this holy reborn monastery. In memory of our joint prayer today, I would like to give you this holy panagia, with gratitude for your efforts and for bringing this holy icon to the Kursk Root Hermitage.

I would also like to sincerely thank Archbishop Herman for his efforts, which he carries out in this blessed land of Kursk, establishing Church life on reborn and renewed foundations, on which the spiritual life of our people was originally founded. As a sign of my recognition and in memory of today's divine service, I would like to give you this icon of the Mother of God, a holy panagia. Remember especially this day, which fell during the years of your archpastor care of the lands of Kursk.

The reconstruction of the holy places is the duty of the entire people. Everyone takes part: the Patriarch, the bishops, the clergy, but most of all our faithful laity. It is by their means and by the fulfillment of their will that churches and monasteries are being built and the holy places restored today.

In memory of our prayerful exchange, in memory of the rebirth of the Kursk Root Hermitage, I would like to give to this church, dedicated to the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos, this icon of the Savior, also with a commemorative Patriarchal

inscription. Praying before this icon, remember this bright day. Together we were participants in a great triumph of Orthodoxy, witnessing God's victory over the tumult of this world. Prayer before this icon for our country, for our Church, for the Patriarch, for your participation in the Patriarch's service is manifestly foremostly in your prayers for him. May this icon of the Savior be a great reminder of today's historic event in the life of our Church and the land of Kursk.

I would like to give each of you, my dears, a copy of the icon of the Mother of God "of the Sign" along with my blessing. I am not able to bless every one of you and place my hand upon each of you, but this is the yearning desire of my heart. For this reason I give you my blessing in the form of these little icons. Take them to your homes and preserve them as a reverential reminder of this holy day. I ask the brethren of this holy monastery, upon conclusion of the service, to immediately distribute without delay these holy icons to all the participants in today's festivities, with my blessing.

Once again I would like to sincerely greet you all, dear fathers, brothers, and sisters, with this great day. I especially congratulate the brethren of this holy monastery. I call upon you, dear fathers and brothers, to worthily fulfill your monastic *podvig* within these holy walls, remembering always the holy history of this monastery, remembering that great holy icon, which was found and kept here, remembering the struggles of our people, that you may be worthy to carry the light of Christ's truth to all those who will enter these holy walls in search of spiritual help and support. May the blessing of God be with all of you, with our country, with our Church, and with our people.

Amen!