



Celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the enthronement of Patriarch Kirill opened with a grand divine service at the Church of Christ the Saviour

On 1 February 2010, the first anniversary of the enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour.

Among the Patriarch's concelebrants were His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Holy Synod permanent members including His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga; Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus; Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, Metropolitan Vladimir of Kishinev and All Moldova; Archbishop Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations; as well as hierarchs of autonomous and self-governed Churches of the Moscow Patriarchate and other hierarchs who came for the celebrations.

There were also concelebrants who represent Local Orthodox Churches at the Moscow Patriarchate, among them Metropolitan Athanasios of Cyrene (Orthodox Church of Alexandria), Archbishop Niphon of Philippiopolis (Orthodox Church of Antioch), Bishop Anthony of Moravici (Serbian Orthodox Church), Bishop Ignaty of Provat (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), Archimandrite Stephan (Dispirakis) (Orthodox Church of Jerusalem), Archimandrite Zacchaeus (Wood) (Orthodox Church in America), Archpriest Alexy Yuschenko (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), as well as a guest from the Georgian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Nicholas of Akhalkalaki and Kumurdo.

Among the celebrants were also fathers superior of stauropegial monasteries; Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, Archpriest Alexander Lebedev, Russian Church Outside Russia's secretary for inter-Orthodox relations, and Moscow clergy.

The service was attended by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and his wife, representatives of supreme governmental bodies and public organizations and numerous guests, the patriarchal press service reports.

Among the worshippers on that auspicious day were Hegumen Philip (Riabykh), a DECR vice-chairman, and leaders of DECR units and their staff.

During the service, His Holiness granted hierarchal awards to several Archpastors of the Russian Church.

After the liturgy, Metropolitan Vladimir of St. Petersburg and Ladoga read out a letter of congratulations to His Holiness Kirill on behalf of the Holy Synod and the plenitude of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Archpriest Leonid Roldugin, dean of the Preobrazhensky Okrug, offered congratulations to Patriarch Kirill on behalf of the Moscow clergy.

The Holy Synod presented His Holiness with a set of patriarchal vestments and the Moscow clergy presented him with a copy of the Icon of Our Lady of Vladimir.

His Holiness Kirill gave Eucharistic vessels to the Church of Christ the Saviour.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia delivered a congratulatory speech during the fraternal repast.

Metropolitan Nicholas of Akhalkalaki and Kumurdo read out a congratulatory message from His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia.

Congratulatory messages from President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin were read out.

Congratulations were extended by Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine on behalf of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk on behalf of the Byelorussian Exarchate, as well as by Archbishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad on behalf of the monastics, Archbishop Yevgeny of Vereya on behalf of the theological schools, and Archpriest Mikhail Ryazantsev on behalf of the clergy.

Among the speakers was Archbishop Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch of All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, who extended congratulations to His Holiness Kirill on behalf of the Moscow representatives of Local Orthodox Churches.

Metropolitan Varsonofy of Saransk and Mordovia thanked His Holiness Kirill on behalf of the Archpastors who were awarded on that day.

His Holiness Kirill warmly thanked all those who congratulated him, noting that the speeches of Metropolitans Vladimir and Filaret reminded him once again of his unforgettable visits to Ukraine and

Belarus.

Expressing gratitude to Metropolitan Nicholas who brought congratulations from Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya II, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church said in particular, 'It is my profound conviction that in spite of the difficulties which have arisen in inter-state relations, the power of gravitation existing between our peoples because of their unity in faith will overcome all the difficulties and, with God's help, relations between these states will improve. Then historians would say that at a most difficult time the Churches proved to be equal to the occasion: they did not wavered, they did not follow in politicians' steps but, filled with sincere love of one another, remained connecting links between the two Orthodox nations'.

His Holiness Kirill also thanked Archbishop Niphon for the greetings he brought on behalf of Local Churches' representatives to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, saying, 'We attach a great importance to the presence of fraternal Local Orthodox Churches in Moscow' adding that the maintaining relations and sharing in prayer with representatives of Local Churches contributed to the unity of world Orthodoxy.

DECR Communication Service

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