



Patriarch Kirill celebrates at the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin on the Feast of the Annunciation



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On April 7, the 3rd Sunday of Lent, the Adoration of the Cross, the feast of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God, and the commemoration day of the demise of St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia (1925), His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' celebrated the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great at the Annunciation Cathedral of the Moscow Kremlin.

This day marks the fifty-fifth anniversary of priestly service of His Holiness. Monk Kirill (Gundyaev), a student of the Leningrad Theological Academy, was ordained deacon on 7 April 1969, the Patriarchal Press Service reports.

Concelebrating with His Holiness were Metropolitan Grigoriy of Voskresensk, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate and the first Patriarchal vicar for Moscow; Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Nikandr of Naro-Fominsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Finance and Economic Administration; Archbishop Foma of Odintsovo and Krasnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administrative Secretariat and rector of the Epiphany Cathedral in Moscow; Archbishop Savva of Zelenograd, deputy chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Bishop Alexy of Ramenskoye, private secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov, secretary to His Holiness for Moscow; hegumen Ioann (Ludishchev), abbot of the Sretensky stavropegic monastery in Moscow and acting rector of the Sretensky theological academy; archpriest Vyacheslav Shestakov, rector of the churches of the Patriarchal Metochion in Moscow Zaryadye and sacristan of the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Dormition and churches of the Moscow Kremlin; hieromonk Yelisei (Menailov) of the Novospassky stavropegic monastery in Moscow; and clergymen of the capital city.

Among those attending the service were Anna Yu. Kuznetsova, Deputy Chair of the State Duma; Sergei A. Gavrillov, Chairman of the State Duma Committee on Property, Land and Property Relations; and Nikita Yu. Chaplin, Deputy of the State Duma and warden of the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Dormition in the Kremlin.

Liturgical hymns were sung by the choir of the Sretensky stavropegic monastery conducted by Andrei S. Poltorukhin.

The Patriarchal service was broadcast live on the Soyuz and Spas TV channels, and on Patriarchia.ru, the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

At the Litany of Fervent Supplication, prayers were offered up for His Holiness Patriarch Kirill:

“Again we pray to Thee, our All-Bountiful Lord, to look with Thy merciful eye upon us offering thanksgiving prayers on the fifty-fifth anniversary of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's service at the Throne of God and to have mercy on him through Thy grace and compassions and fulfill all his petitions and pardon him all transgressions both voluntary and involuntary; let his prayers and alms be acceptable before the Throne of Thy dominion, and deliver him from every tribulation, harm, sorrow, and ailments, and grant him health and length of days; we pray to Thee, our most gracious Saviour, hearken and have mercy.

Again we pray to Thee, our All-Merciful Lord, to accept this gratitude from us, Thy unprofitable servants, for Thy good deeds, which Thou have been pouring out abundantly on Thy servant, His

Holiness Patriarch Kirill, during fifty-five years of his service at the Throne of God, and may Thou pour out upon him in abundance the mercies and compassions of Thy love for mankind in the coming years. We pray to Thee, O All-Bountiful Lord, hearken and have mercy.”

Also, special prayers for Holy Rus' were offered.

Metropolitan Gregory of Voskresensk read a thanksgiving for God’s blessings bestowed upon His Holiness Patriarch Kirill “during fifty-five years of his service at the Throne of God”:

“O Lord Jesus Christ our God, the God of all mercies and bounties Whose mercy is immeasurable and Whole love for mankind is an unfathomable deep: Falling down in adoration before Thy Majesty, with fear and trembling, as unworthy servants, we give thanks unto Thee for Thy great benefits which Thou have been showing upon Thy servant, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, during fifty-five years of his service at the Throne of God and glorify Thee, do praise, sing and magnify Thy loving-kindness, and thank Thee in humble submissiveness for Thy immeasurable and ineffable mercy and for hearkening to the prayers of Thy servants to vouchsafe blessings to Thy faithful servant, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, who is now being honoured, and to deliver the Russian Church, which he is leading, from every evil and misfortune thus granting it peace and tranquility; we pray to Thee and to Thy eternal Father and the Most Holy, Good and Life-creating Spirit and sing: Glory to Thee, O God, our Benefactor, unto the ages of ages.”

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church recited prayer for Holy Rus'.

The Liturgy was followed by the veneration of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of the Lord.

At the singing of “The Archangel’s Voice”, the magnification to the feast, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill venerated the icon of the Annunciation of the Most Holy Mother of God placed in the lower tier of the iconostasis.

Metropolitan Grigoriy addressed His Holiness with words of congratulations on behalf of all participants in the service, saying: “Please accept our most heartfelt and most sincere congratulations on the Feast of the Annunciation and on the fifty-fifth anniversary of your priestly service. You have become a clergyman of the Russian Orthodox Church by God’s Providence and by the work of the Holy Spirit. Your unforgettable and ever-memorable teacher, Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad and Novgorod, saw a future luminary of the Russian Orthodox Church in you and by the laying on of hands and prayers has imparted special gifts of grace to you. Since then, you have devoted yourself entirely to priestly service, and the fifty-five years testify to your zealous good deeds. You are giving a genuine example of service to all clergymen of the Russian Orthodox Church, an example of how a person should give himself to the service of God.”

The Primate of the Russian Church addressed the worshippers with primatial homily, saying in particular, “I sincerely thank you all for your prayers for me and for attending the Divine Liturgy at which we prayed together. I feel that today not only the pious faithful were praying for me at this cathedral, but very many people in our Church, too. Indeed, common prayer for the Patriarch is not only the commemoration at every divine service. I know that people add their own heartfelt prayers for helping the Patriarch to bear his cross.

“I remember that day fifty-five years ago very well. The service was celebrated at the Holy Trinity Cathedral of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. While waiting for deacon's ordination, I was dutifully standing in front of the iconostasis with a vessel for washing the bishop's hands and heard the words of the prokimenon: Sing to the Lord, and praise Him! Proclaim every day the good news that He has saved us. As if struck by a force I said to myself: these words should be the symbol and sign of my life.

The Lord has favoured me with His aid at any place for which by God's Providence the church authorities appointed me, be it the Leningrad theological schools, the Diocese of Smolensk, or the Department for External Church Relations with a leading role of its chairman, and now my Patriarchal ministry. I felt that the Lord was helping me to proclaim good news of His salvation not only in church sermons, but also in all kinds of my labours as Patriarch in which I seek to include good news, because only then the work is filled with the content that saves. Even administrative, economic, disciplinary and many other issues have the saving sense for people and for Patriarch himself when they are filled with the power of God's grace. It is with the words Proclaim every day the good news that the Lord has saved us I have been living until today.”

The presentation of the Patriarchal awards followed.

Archbishop Savva of Zelenograd, was presented with a memorial panagia in consideration of his diligent archpastoral labours and in connection with the fifteenth anniversary of his work at the Moscow Patriarchate. Hegumen Ioann (Ludishchev) was awarded the Order of St. Macarius, Metropolitan of Moscow, 3rd class, in consideration of his labours for the good of the Holy Church and in connection with 50th birthday.

According to tradition, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, members of the Patriarchal Volunteers youth movement and pious faithful released doves into the sky from the stairs of the Cathedral of the Annunciation.