



Grand reception in Kremlin on the occasion of the millennium of the demise of Prince Vladimir

July 28, 2015 – A grand reception was given in the Kremlin by the President of Russia on the occasion of the millennium of the demise of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles.

Present at the reception were His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, permanent members of the Holy Synod, heads of the ROC synodal departments, bishops and clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate, the delegations of Local Orthodox Churches who came to Moscow for the celebrations, representatives of the traditional religions in Russia, state officials and public figures.

Speeches were made by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

Transcripts of the speeches by President Putin and Patriarch Kirill

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Putin: Your Holiness, dear guests, colleagues and friends:

In these days, Russia and the whole Orthodox world are celebrating the Baptism of Russia.

The significance of this event in which the people found faith and spiritual support is impossible to overestimate. Clearly, the Baptism became a key turning point in the entire Russian history, statehood

and our culture. Our common duty is to honour this epoch-making stage in the development of Russia. And assembled here today are representatives of governmental bodies, civic associations, hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church and Local Orthodox Churches, representatives of all traditional religions in Russia, which was built as a great state on the multi-national and multi-confessional basis.

The Baptism of Rus' has entered the church tradition and the people's memory together with the name and deeds of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles. The millennium of his demise has enabled us once again to become aware of the calibre of his personality as an outstanding builder of Rus', the significance of his choice for the generations to come, the continuity of our age-long history and our indestructible ties with the behests of our forefathers.

Prince Vladimir was fated to become a great sovereign. His choice was far-sighted and utterly responsible as it served as a source for the development of Russia as a unique country-civilization.

The adoption of Christianity was based on Prince Vladimir's deep love for his native land, his serious spiritual reflection, his search for a single source that could rally the people and unite separate lands.

'It is amazing to see how much good he did for the Russian land by baptizing it', says *The Tale of the Bygone Years*. By stopping the internecine feuds and defeating external adversaries, Prince Vladimir initiated the development of a united Russian nation and paved the way to the building of a strong centralized Russian State.

Rus' grew stronger, more powerful and authoritative in the eyes of the neighbours who were near and who were far and held negotiations with nations in East and West on equal footing.

Expressed in the Prince's choice was also the aspiration of our people for lofty ideals of good, truth and

justices, fraternal unity and solidarity with the whole world. Fyodor Dostoevsky called it 'all-humanness'.

Prince Vladimir became a real organizer of his native land, its cultural and economic development, and a wise and far-sighted ruler of Rus'. He remained as such for us after he embraced the holy baptism in old Chersonese – Korsun. These spiritual sources nourish the fraternal Slavic nations of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus today as well.

We remain faithful to the choice made by Prince Vladimir. We cherish peace and accord in our multi-ethnic country and seek together to ensure her good and prosperity and treat with respect the traditions of all her peoples and all the traditional religions in Russia.

Allow me once again to greet you, Your Holiness, and all who are present on the occasion of the Baptism of Rus', the commemoration day of Prince Vladimir, and to wish you success in your multifaceted spiritual work and in your important service of the people of Russia.

Thank you for your attention.

Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia: Your Excellency, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin,

Honourable representatives of Local Orthodox Churches,

Distinguished representatives of the state,

Your Eminences and Graces,

Dear participants in the reception:

I would like to warmly greet you as you have gathered together in the Moscow Kremlin for the celebrations devoted to the Day of the Baptism of Rus' and the millennium of the demise of Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles.

The *Life* of the holy Prince Vladimir shows us a visible example of a feat, both personal and social, significant for the destiny of many nations and millions of people. By embracing the holy baptism and changing the way of his life and the lifestyle of his subjects, he established a fundamentally new norm of personal and social behaviour based on the Gospel's commandments. If murder, human sacrifice, deception and self-interest were natural before and believed by many to be the right means of achieving power and happy way of life, after the Prince of Kiev's historical action, the common understanding of what is good and what is bad, what is admissible and what is inadmissible, changed. Evil deeds did not disappear from the life of Eastern Slavic tribes, of course, but they lost for good the halo of something admissible, necessary and lawful.

By choosing a pious way of life and by initiating the building of churches, by manifesting his concern for the armed force, ordinary people, the miserable and even criminals, the wise ruler whom the people nicknamed the Red Sun proved to his subjects that the truth of God and life according to the gospel of Christ are immeasurably higher than human glory, honours and wealth. But it is not only the holy baptism that Prince Vladimir embraced from the envoys from Constantinople and clergy in Korsun. As we remember from the chronicles, in his search for power, beauty and truth, the Prince had analyzed and assessed various religious traditions and cultures they formed already before his baptism. For his people, for Rus' as she gathered strength, he chose the lofty ideal of Byzantine statehood and book scholarship. In that historical era there was no culture or state more developed than Byzantium. The desire to become like the most educated Christian country determined for centuries ahead the way of development of our Motherland as well. Thus, the religious choice of the Russian ruler was also the choice of the Christian way of life, the style of social life, culture and way of thinking, the choice of a certain civilizational code different in that the Christian values became the basis for social order and social relations which opened up for the individual of any religion and views an opportunity to live together with the majority without feeling impaired or being subjected to discrimination. Remarkably, these principles, which were laid like seeds under Prince Vladimir, thrive today too, enabling our country to live and develop in peace.

Thus, thanks to the Christian teaching with its aesthetics brought to the Russian land, there appeared such masterpieces as works by Rublev and Dyonisius, unique ensembles of Russian monasteries and kremlins, lyricism of the Russian Orthodox prayer and church hymns. The church layer of culture, in its turn, became the foundation for the secular culture, which has given to the world the fruits of the works by Pushkin, Gogol, Dostoyevsky, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, and many others who are difficult to enumerate.

The Orthodox ideals of faithfulness, valour, self-sacrifice, love of the Motherland and the Church gave strength to our glorious ancestors for centuries in their defence of the native land in numerous wars and upheavals.

If externally the adoption of Christianity enabled the newly-converted people to join the family of Christian states, internally, from the viewpoint of inner human changes, the truth of Christ, according to the outstanding Russian historian Vasily Klyuchevsky, made the individual address his inner world and thus contributed to the growth of national self-awareness.

The deeds of Prince Vladimir and his personality become especially relevant against the developments taking place inside and outside our country today. And though there are independent states in the territory of historical Rus', their people, I believe, wish to be united spiritually; for our life is based on the same faith chosen by Prince Vladimir, the man who formed the outlines of a great Eurasian state in whose territory the independent states exist today. This is to be realized especially clearly when we speak about the spiritual unity of the fraternal nations who came out of the same baptismal font – the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

I would like to address special greetings to those who bear the name of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles, including our President. It is your double name day today according to your first name as well as patronymic.

To be named after the Baptizer of Russia is certainly an honour and responsibility. I wish you, highly esteemed Vladimir Vladimirovich, and all those who celebrate their name day today, that you may always see your heavenly patron as a great and lofty example. And on my part, I believe that St. Vladimir extends his protection to all those who bear his name and who continue his cause.

We all know that it is only a good example that works best of all in every teaching. The generations to come cannot be successful if those before them have not left them a role model. St. Vladimir is such for us. Our nations associate with him the memory of finding the truth through which it became possible for a whole civilization to join the rich spiritual experience.

Today I am delighted to greet the representatives of old Constantinople from which the first bishops and clergy came to Rus' and under whose protection the young Russian Church developed for several centuries. With a special feeling I address the words of greetings and gratitude to the representatives of all the sister Local Orthodox Churches, who have come to share with us in this celebration.

Against the tragic events in the world today, we are especially acutely aware of the need to consolidate the pan-Orthodox unity, solidarity and mutual support. Once again I greet you all on the occasion of this important church-state celebration. Thank you, Vladimir Vladimirovich, for the opportunity to share with you in this festivity, and may God's blessing and the Protecting Veil of the Heavenly Queen through the intercession of Prince Vladimir be with our Motherland, over the entire space of historical Rus' and over all who believe themselves to be continuers of the Holy Prince's cause.

Thank you, Vladimir Vladimirovich.

1. **V. Putin:** Dear friends, I once again greet His Holiness the Patriarch, Primate of the Church, all those who confess Orthodoxy, on the occasion of this feast. I would like to address special

words of gratitude to the representatives of other traditional religions in Russia for being together with us today. Nothing divides us but very many things unite us: the unity of moral values and the common beloved Motherland.

Greetings!

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