



Primate of Russian Church celebrates Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on Christmas Eve

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In the morning of 6 January 2013, the thirty-first Sunday after Pentecost, feast day of the Holy Fathers and Christmas Eve, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated the Divine Liturgy and Great Vespers at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.

Concelebrating with His Holiness were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations; Bishop Ignaty of Bronnitsy, chairman of the Synodal Department for Youth Affairs; Archpriest Mikhail Ryazantsev, sacristan of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour; and Moscow clerics.

During the Liturgy, the Primate of the Russian Church ordained into priesthood deacon Andrei Barkhatnov of the Stavropegic Convent of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God.

Praying at the service was Mr. Vadim Yakunin, chairman of the Board of Directors of “Protek” company, co-founder of the St Gregory the Theologian Charity Foundation.

After the Liturgy and Great Vespers, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill congratulated the clergymen and laymen on the coming Feast of the Nativity of Christ:

“Your Eminence and Your Grace! Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters!

I cordially greet you and congratulate you on the coming great Feast of the Nativity of Christ. Today we celebrate Christmas Eve and commemorate all forerunners of Christ according to the flesh, from Abraham to David, from David to the exile to Babylon, and from the exile to Babylon to the Nativity of Christ the Saviour, thus entering the history. This helps us understand that the Saviour is a part of our history because He is a human being according to the flesh, had relatives and forerunners, and “from the Virgin took flesh to dwell with us”, as the great Andrew of Crete said.

Today we particularly glorify His name, because He was incarnate, became one of us and sacrificed His human life for our sins. This great mystery of the Incarnation of God helps us understand the *raison d’etre* of human history. This does not imply getting richer, gaining more power, or conquering other nations, as many people thought and still think, but the understanding of the will of God and his Divine

Providence about the world and human beings. Through the Nativity of Christ the Saviour we can understand God's predestination and follow it, and comply with his law and will for humanity.

May the celebration of the Nativity of Christ strengthen our faith in the salutary mission of Our Lord and Saviour, Who for us men and for our salvation was incarnate of the Most Immaculate Virgin Mary in Bethlehem in Judea. Amen.”

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill presented Mr. Vadim Yakunin with the Order of St Sergius of Radonezh, 1st class.

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