



## On Dormition Day Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Rostislav of the Czech Land and Slovakia celebrate Divine Liturgy at Kremlin Cathedral of the Dormition



On August 28, 2016, the Day of the Dormition, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian and His Beatitude Metropolitan Rostislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Patriarch Cathedral of the Dormition in the Moscow Kremlin.

Metropolitan Rostislav came to Russia on August 26 for an official visit, leading a delegation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

His Holiness and His Beatitude were assisted by a great assembly of concelebrants. Along with Russian Orthodox Church hierarchs, high officials, Moscow deans and clergy, there were Metropolitan Kallistos of Deokleia (Patriarchate of Constantinople), Archbishop Michael of Prague and the Czech Lands, Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands

and Slovakia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Archpriest Nikolay Lischenyuk, ROC representative to the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. Present were also high-ranking governmental officials and State Duma deputies, as well as prominent cultural figures.

After the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, Patriarch Kirill lifted up a prayer for peace in Ukraine.

The liturgy was broadcast live by Soyuz TV network.

After the service Patriarch Kirill addressed the congregation. Speaking on the significance of the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, he stressed its close relation to Holy Pascha. 'It is not accidental that pious people call the Dormition the Pascha of the Mother of God, because we celebrate today the ascension of the Most Holy Mother of God in her body to heaven, the elevation of her human nature into divine life... After her death she became alive by the power of God's grace and now dwells in the mansions of Her Son and our God'.

Speaking about the situation in the world today, His Holiness said, 'We are living at a difficult time when Christians in many countries are oppressed; moreover, in some states the very faith in Christ Crucified and Risen is persecuted and the faithfulness to Christian beliefs is even punished by death. Along with direct persecution against the Church and Christians, there are other dangerous forms of struggle with the divine principle in our life. In many countries the God-given human morality is being destroyed, with people rejecting any commitments before the Lord and proclaiming their full autonomy from Him and as much as denying His existence. Today's society is affected by a deep moral crisis, which was predicted by the Saviour who said, *Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold* (Mt. 24:12). By these words He proclaimed a very important relation between people's faith, their devotion and reverence before God, and love. Love is a gift of God, because God Himself is love, and love cannot emerge in a human heart without God's participation. When one feels a strong love in one's heart, one should remember that at this moment the Lord has touched him placing on him an enormous responsibility to dispose of the great gift of love in a proper way. That is why our battle today, our struggle for the preservation of the moral principle in human life, for the preservation of faith in human hearts is, in some sense, the struggle to make love present in human life and through love to have what we describe by the simple word 'happiness'. The Church has no other goals, no other tasks except for fostering faith in people's hearts, their devotion, and through this, their ability to love others.

'Our witness before those who are external is effective only when we ourselves have love between ourselves, when we are united. For this reason, we should by all means strengthen the unity of Holy Orthodoxy, Holy Orthodox Churches of God. The life of peoples spiritually nourished by Local Churches varies very much, for in the world there are many different cultures and Churches live in different political, social and economic situations. All this leaves a stamp on people's outlook, on their stand in

life, and the contradictions of today's world, whether we may want it or not, are brought through our human nature into relations between Churches. Therefore, it is on the Primates of the Churches, episcopate, clergy and faithful that our ability to preserve the unity of the whole Orthodox Church in the universe depends. And by all possible means we must strengthen Holy Orthodoxy remembering that for us all the Holy Mother of God is our Mother and we are Her children, as St. Theophanes the Recluse so strongly put it in his homily on the Feast of the Dormition'.

Then His Holiness greeted His Beatitude Metropolitan Rostislav and His Eminence Archbishop George of Michalovce, as well as His Eminence Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, representative of the Patriarch of Constantinople, who came to Russia for a pilgrimage. Speaking about the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Patriarch Kirill stressed their common tradition tracing back to the missionary work of Ss Cyril and Methodius, whose preaching in Moravia was to lead to the Baptism of Russia.

'In 1951, the Russian Orthodox Church granted canonical autocephaly to the Czechoslovakian Orthodox Church. This step was dictated not by a political situation, not by the influence of secular forces, but our Church's clear awareness of the hard situation in which our brothers and sister found themselves in post-war Czechoslovakia. For political reasons, nobody from outside except for the Russian Church could give real help to the Orthodox in Czechoslovakia. We themselves were lacking everything as our churches were closed and the clergy were just coming out of prisons and camps, and our people just began to get rid of the heavy consequences of the Fascist aggression, as our fathers became aware of the need to be together with the Orthodox people of the then Czechoslovakia, not to dominate the flock, not to dictate our own terms to the small flock as they were at that time, but in the matter of only a few years, in 1951, to grant full canonical independence, the status of autocephaly, to the Church of Czechia and Slovakia. And now, after 65 years, we with gratitude to God can note that the Orthodox of the Czech Lands and Slovakia is a full-fledged sister in the family of Autocephalous Local Orthodox Churches, growing from strength to strength and properly carrying out her salvific mission... We rejoice in the fact that there are no more disputes and bewilderments around the autocephalous status of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. It is another testimony to the propriety of the action made by our fathers in 1951, when they proclaimed the autocephaly of the small Orthodox flock in the Czech Lands of Slovakia'.

Speaking about the difficult period in the history of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, which she has experienced in recent years, Patriarch Kirill thanked God for granting peace to this Church. 'We thank God that the former hardships are gradually overcome and the most difficult things are past. I would like to assure you that you and your fellow-archpastors can always rely on the support of the Mother – the Russian Orthodox Church. She is not the Mother by the origin of Orthodoxy in the Czech Land and Slovakia, but by the fact that the Russian Church took the suffering Orthodox

people in Czechia and Slovakia in her fold in the post-war time and certainly became Mother for them’.

As a token of his visit to Moscow and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy in the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Kremlin, Patriarch Kirill presented Metropolitan Rostislav with a pectoral icon and a cross produced in memory of the millennium of the demise of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles and presented the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia with a copy of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God.

Addressing His Holiness and all the participants in the liturgy, Metropolitan Rostislav said in particular, ‘From our hearts we thank you for the love that we feel in your words, for the brotherly care given us everywhere and in everything, for the spiritual joy that you have given us by celebrating together with us the Divine Liturgy here, in the Moscow Kremlin’s Cathedral of the Dormition. We as one of the closest Local Orthodox Church always feel brotherly love and support given by the Russian Orthodox Church. Our Churches and our nations are united by common cultural roots and age-old historical relations. Today, in the walls of this magnificent cathedral, we not only think, but almost physically feel participation in the history of Holy Rus’, the intercession of her saints, the power of her faith and devotion.

‘No political trends can hinder the age-old relations between our two Local Churches. May relations between them and unity be strong for the good of the two Churches and nations for many good years’.

In conclusion of the celebrations, His Holiness awarded church orders and medals to a number of people.

*Patriarchal Press Service*

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*Photos by the Patriarchal Press Service*

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