



Primate of the Russian Church celebrates Great Vespers at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on the feast of the Nativity of Christ



In the evening of 7 January 2016, the feast day of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated Great Vespers at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.

Concelebrating were Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Valentin (Mischuk); Metropolitan Arseny of Istra, first vicar of the Patriarch; over ten archbishops and bishops; representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches of Alexandria, Antioch, Serbia, Jerusalem, Bulgaria, the Czech Lands and Slovakia and the Orthodox Church of America; heads of the Synodal departments; abbots of the stavropegic monasteries, and clerics of Moscow and the Moscow region.

Praying at the service were hegumenesses of the stavropegic convents, Moscow clerics, members of the Moscow parish councils, staff members of the Synodal department and many parishioners.

The choir of the Cathedral Church conducted by Ilya Tolkachev sang liturgical hymns. The service was broadcast by TV Center channel with comments of Professor Alexei Svetozarsky of the Moscow Theological Academy.

For reading from the Gospel His Holiness used the Gospel Book that dates back to the time of the Empress Yelizaveta Petrovna and is brought out from the sanctuary only twice a year, for Great Vespers on the Nativity of Christ and on Pascha.

After the service, Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna greeted Patriarch Kirill on behalf of the whole Russian Orthodox Church mentioning that this year marks the 70th birthday of His Holiness and 40 years of his episcopal ministry. Christmas greetings were brought to Patriarch Kirill by representatives of the 'Orthodox Volunteers' movement on behalf of Moscow Orthodox youth.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill greeted all those gathered with the great feast of the Nativity of Christ and thanked Metropolitan Juvenaly and representatives of the Orthodox youth for their kind words addressed to him.

He spoke about the feast, saying that the Lord has not brought a new law to the world, but reminded people of the true meaning and contents of the Divine law which the Lord has given to Moses. 'It was not fortuitous as this law regulated moral life of human beings for centuries and secular regulations were based on it. Indeed, law cannot be separated from morality, but nowadays we hear that there is no moral law binding for everyone.

As we celebrated the Nativity we confess our faith in God, again saying to the world that the Lord has come to renew moral law without which the life of the entire human civilization is impossible. To make this law work, one should believe in God. What can help us to believe? There is a force along with good books and sermons in church. It is our own conscience, our inherent ethical precepts and moral feelings, coinciding with God's law.

The sermon of the Church is of a great significance to the world. If even more people heed this sermon, we will have hope for the future, because people with common moral values can find common language in spite of all problems, conflicts and contradictions. All problems can be settled if people have a certain moral consensus. However, it would be impossible to reach consensus if we abandon God, because no man, even a very clever and authoritative one, cannot provide consensus.

May people keep firmly in their minds and hearts the words of the Church through God's grace... I see changes in the religious state of our society, and though they are not as great as we would have wished them to be, they encourage us because they are taking place under conditions that cannot be called favourable. A flow of hostile godless information descends on people, and we may call the events happening in the midst of our youth a miracle. Addressing the clerics, I ask you, dear bishops and priests, to remember that the future depends on your labours and thus on the congregation which you lead. May God grant us to be always able to say the living words about salvation both to the neighbours and to the people who are far off. I wholeheartedly wish you all to be firm in your faith, ardent in your piety, and, being God's servants, affirm faith in our people.'

His Holiness greeted all the worshippers with the Nativity of Christ, wishing them to be firm in their faith and not to succumb to temptations and said: hope, light and life are there where God is.

After the Divine service the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with Orthodox young people living in the Russian capital. They congratulated His Holiness on the Nativity of Christ and sang hymns of the feast.

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