



Patriarch Kirill: By celebrating the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus' we close the link of times

In conclusion of the celebrations marking the 1025th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', a festive repast took place with the participation of Primates and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches, hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church from various countries, high governmental officials and public figures.

The guests were greeted by Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk, Patriarchal Exarch for All Belarus.

Speeches were made by Metropolitan Sava of Warsaw and All Poland, Byelorussian deputy prime minister. A. Tozik, Archbishop Chrisostomos of New Justiniana and All Cyprus, Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria, Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, who spoke on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church Holy Synod, and Russian Ambassador to Belarus A. Surikov, who, on behalf of the Russian President, presented Metropolitan Filaret with the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky.

Speaking in conclusion of the 1025 anniversary, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia reminded the gathering of the historical vertical, the link of times and the Church as its guardian, for 'for her, there are no dead but all are living'.

'A touch with the past has a great importance for the modern man', he said, 'It is not only the link of times that has been closed in this feast. At the same time, 'horizontally' we have experienced the reinforcement of our good fraternal relations. This horizontal is spread through the whole historical Rus' to embrace today Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and other countries in which the Russian Church is present, preaching the word of God. These links, both vertical and horizontal, highlight the greatest and immortal treasure that opened for people a new era, a new view of life, and gave them enough spiritual power to preserve our faith alive and relevant both for the two thousand years of the existence of the Church and Christianity and the 1025 years of the existence of our Russian Orthodoxy. It is amazing how relevant Christianity is. It is difficult to imagine that we, people of the 21st century, are united by the same ideal

before which the ancient people of Kiev bowed their heads. There is no other force that would unite people, generations, countries and nations both 'horizontally' and 'vertically' and yet this ideal has no support either in power or political authority. It is only God's power and God's spiritual force – grace that unites people and forms this unity'.

Among visible expressions of this unity, Patriarch Kirill said, is participation of Heads and representatives of Local Orthodox Churches in the festivities. They represent the Orthodox Church from end to end of the earth. He underscored the great spiritual and symbolical significance of the common celebration of the Divine Liturgy in Moscow, Kiev and Minsk, when the prayer lifted up by the Heads and representatives of their Churches at the same altar of God united millions and millions of people.

Mentioning with gratitude the great contribution made by the heads of the three states, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, to the arrangement of the celebrations, Patriarch Kirill said, 'We pray that the fraternal relations that united these three peoples may never weaken, so that no force could destroy our unity which goes back to St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles – the unity which has proved its vitality through the 1025 years'.

Patriarch Kirill awarded a number of persons who made a considerable contribution to the organization of the celebrations in Belarus. He presented Byelorussian Deputy Prime Minister A. Tozik and the Commissioner for Religious Affairs L. Gulyako with the Order of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles, 3d degree. The chairman of the Minsk Regional Executive Committee, Mr. B. Batura, and the Chairman of the Minsk Municipal Executive Committee, N. Ladutko, were awarded the order of Glory and Honour, 3d degree.

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