



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrates Great Vespers at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour on Christmas

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In the evening of 7 January 2013, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia celebrated Great Vespers at the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

Concelebrating with His Holiness were Metropolitan Juvenaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Archbishop Arseny of Istra, Patriarch's first vicar for Moscow; vicars of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and vicars of the Moscow diocese; representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia – Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrenaika (Orthodox Church of Alexandria), Archbishop Niphon of Philippopolis (Orthodox Church of Antioch), Bishop Antonije of Moravici (Serbian Orthodox Church), archimandrite Stephan (Dispirakis) (Orthodox Church of Jerusalem), and archpriest Alexy Yuschenko (Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia).

Concelebrating with the Primate of the Russian Church were also archpriest Vladimir Divakov, Patriarch's secretary for Moscow; archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations; archpriest Mikhail Ryazantsev, sacristan of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, vice-chairman of the DECR chairman; archpriest Alexander Ganaba, secretary of the Moscow diocesan administration; fathers superior of stavropegic monasteries; and Moscow clerics.

Praying at the service were protopresbyter Matfey Stadnyuk, rector of the Cathedral of the Epiphany in Moscow; Mr. Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Information Department; hegumennesses of stavropegic convents; Moscow clergymen; members of Moscow churches' parish councils; staff members of Synodal institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church; Muscovites and visitors to the capital of Russia.

The Primate of the Russian Church addressed all those present with his primatial homily, saying in particular:

“The Feast of the Nativity of Christ helps us better understand the *raison d'être* of historical events and the destination of the Church and at the same time teaches us to love. The Feast of the Nativity of Christ is the celebration of God's love to human beings and the proclamation of love as the highest value. Let

us accept this message of God into our hearts and serve him in his holiest and most important work – the salvation of humanity.

Today, as clergymen are praying together with numerous worshippers, I would like to address Moscow clerics with the following words: “Quench not the Spirit” (1 Thess 5:19). May the reverence for the shrine and the fear of God always abide in your hearts because your work is of critical importance for the salvation of many people.”

After the service, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill accepted greetings from the bishops, clergymen and laymen.

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