



Patriarch Kirill congratulates Metropolitan Christopher on 60th anniversary of autocephaly of Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia

On December 8, 2011, the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia marked the 60th anniversary since canonical autocephaly was granted her by the Russian Orthodox Church. His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia sent a congratulatory letter on the occasion of this remarkable date. Its text was read out by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, during the solemn service celebrated at St. Nicholas's at Staromestska Square, Prague.

To: His Beatitude Christopher

Archbishop of Prague

Metropolitan of the Czech Lands and Slovakia

Your Beatitude,

Beloved Brother and Con-celebrant at God's altar:

On behalf of the archpastors, clergy, monastics and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church, I would like to cordially congratulate you and the whole God-loving Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia gathered under your omophorion on the 60th anniversary of her autocephalous life, the beginning of which was made by the historical decree of the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate on November 23, 1951.

The rebirth of holy Orthodoxy in the Czech Lands and Slovakia has become an important event in the modern history of Eastern Europe, pointing to the unconquerable vital power of Orthodox faith which was brought to the Moravian vast lands by the great Slavic illuminators.

Concerned for her forefathers' faith taking root in the places where of Sts Cyril and Methodius Equal-to-the-Apostles preached, the Russian Orthodox Church blessed an autocephalous life of the Czechoslovakian Orthodox Church as a grace-giving continuer of their work and accepted her in the family of Local Orthodox Churches.

In our days, the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia takes pastoral care of the multinational flock living in the two independent states. In her desire *that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honoured* (2 Thes. 3:1), she bears witness to the truths of holy Orthodoxy before a multitude of people, developing actively her missionary work, religious education and social service.

Your Beatitude and Most Reverend archpastors of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia are frequent and always welcome guests of the Russian Orthodox Church. Our two Churches have worked together in the name of the unity of universal Orthodoxy, making a worthy contribution to the solution of problems on the agenda of the Orthodox community today.

Your Beatitude, through your efforts the spiritual ties between the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and the Russian Orthodox Church, which once was her Mother and today is her beloved Sister, are not weakening but continue strengthening and unfolding in their innermost depths and inner magnificence.

On this solemn and joyful day, I prayerfully wish peace and prosperity to the devoted flock of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and sound health, fullness of spiritual gifts and God's inexhaustible help to you in your primatial ministry.

With brotherly love in the Lord,

+ Kirill

Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia