



Grand reception on the occasion Patriarch Kirill's 65th birthday

On November 20, 2011, after the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour, a grand reception took place on the occasion of Patriarch Kirill's 65th birthday at the refectory chambers of the cathedral.

Among the guests were Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya II of All Georgia, Metropolitan Savva of Warsaw and All Poland, Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, delegations of Local Orthodox Churches, archpastors and clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate, government officials, diplomats and representatives of the public.

Mr. A. Belov, deputy head of the Presidential Administration, read out a message from President Medvedev. Ukraine's charge d'affaires, Mr. V. Yatsyuk, read out a congratulatory message from Ukrainian President, V. Yanukovich.

In his congratulatory speech, Metropolitan Savva said in particular, 'Your spiritual and intellectual richness enriches the faithful of not only the Moscow Patriarchate but also those of Local Orthodox Churches and the non-Orthodox world... We thank you for your brotherly attitude to the Polish Orthodox Church, which you have visited on many occasions'. He recalled that the Polish Orthodox Church had awarded Patriarch Kirill the degree of Doctor *honoris causa* from the Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw in acknowledgement of his service.

Metropolitan Christopher said in his speech among other things, 'God has blessed you with many talents and none of them has been hidden as you have devoted your entire life to the service of the Church of Christ and the preaching of the Word of God and the defence of Orthodox values in today's secularized world... Through your sacrificial service you have gained love and respect not only among your millions-strong flock but throughout the Orthodox world'.

Bishop Antony of Moravici, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, read out a congratulatory message from Patriarch Irinej of Serbia, stating in particular, 'Your personality does not need commendation or lauds from people, much less from Our Humbleness, Your life is the commendation before God and among people, and your archpastoral service in God's vineyard is the crown and adornment of your personality and your life'.

Metropolitan Nifon read out a message of greetings from Patriarch Daniel of Romania, assuring the

head of the Russian Church of brotherly love in Christ and special love and respect for his faith, culture and work for the good of Orthodoxy and stating that Patriarch Kirill is known throughout the world as an outstanding person who carries out an intensive and manifold work. 'You dedicated yourself to the Church immediately after graduation from the Leningrad Theological Academy and your mentor, the late Metropolitan Nikodim, discerned in you, a young theologian, a hope for the future of the Russian Orthodox Church. As a bishop in the period of hard trials for your people, you managed *to please everyone in everything* (2 Cor. 10:33) so that the Church could bear witness to Christ notwithstanding the severe history... Your election to the Patriarchal throne implied a new and great responsibility which you have resolutely taken upon yourself, giving dynamism to the Church and enhancing her social and missionary effort in this rapidly changing and often disturbed world'.

Metropolitan Dometian read out a congratulatory message from Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria, stating in particular, 'the Patriarchal service, with which you have been honoured after the death of Patriarch Alexy II, is a dignified completion and logical height of your journey. By your tireless efforts for the good of the Church of God, you have shown what a good shepherd should be, who gives his life for his sheep and knows what to do in the house of God'.

Archbishop Mitrofan of Belaya Tserkov and Boguslavsk spoke on behalf of Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, who could not come due to serious illness. He said that the Ukrainian faithful loved His Holiness Kirill and rejoiced in his every coming to Ukraine. 'Your every visit to Ukraine is an additional stimulus for the spiritual growth of the Ukrainian people and for the healing of the bleeding sore of schism. We ask you to pray for Ukraine and for Metropolitan Vladimir. We will pray for you not only because the statute requires so but also because our minds and hearts will so'.

Archbishop Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, said in his speech that a bishop is born a bishop from his mother's womb. 'Looking at your primatial efforts we can testify to your tireless work which has enhanced the role of the Church in the life of society, and the spiritual power that accompany your dynamic work makes your every day full of content, like a thousand days, turning into the glory of the Holy Russian Church and Russia', he said, adding, 'In the recent time, after the so-called 'Arab Spring', your concern for the continued presence of Christians and defence of their dignity in North Africa and the Middle East has been highly appreciated and deeply respected. Evidence to it is your recent visit to the Patriarch of Antioch'.

Among the speakers was also the abbot of the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos, Archimandrite Ephrem, who brought the Sash of the Most Holy Mother of God to Russia for veneration.

