



Patriarch Kirill's speech at grand reception on occasion of his 65th birthday

On November 20, 2011, a grand reception took place at the Refectory Chambers of the Cathedral Church of Christ the Saviour on the occasion of Patriarch Kirill's 65th birthday. His Holiness Kirill addressed himself to the guests with the following words of gratitude:

Your Holiness and Beatitude,

Your Beatitudes,

Your Eminences and Graces,

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters:

I would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your prayer and kind words addressed to me.

A remarkable apostolic reading has fallen upon today – a small passage from the second chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians, which helps me respond to the words addressed to me: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them* (Eph. 2:10). These words are exhaustive. We are pre-destined to do good works which God expects from us. This strong expression “prepared beforehand” does not leave any alternative: every alternative is a sin as a deviation from the will of God, from His design for each of us. Therefore, whatever a Patriarch or a bishop or a priest does is the answer to God's predestination, which everyone has.

Today we have also heard the remarkable words which help us understand the mystery of salvation. Even if we do whatever we can and should, it will not accomplish our salvation, nor will it bring us to the Kingdom of God because, according to the apostle whose words we have heard today, *By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast* (Eph. 2:8-9).

Therefore, taking in whatever I am to do as Patriarch, I try as much as I can to respond to God's call, aware that without God's grace it is impossible to do good works, much less to attain salvation. Lying in

the basis of our salvation is our faith – the faith the examples of which are given us in today's Reading of the Gospel (Lk. 8:41-56). This is the faith of the bleeding woman who touched the Saviour's garment, confident that this touch will heal her. It is the miserable Jairus who lost his 12 year-old daughter, who firmly believed that it was sufficient for the Lord to say a word and his dead daughter would rise from the dead. In both cases we see how God works miracles in response to people's faith.

And these endless lines which amazed today's Russians so much – the people lining to touch the Sash of the Most Holy Mother of God, are they not an expression of the people's great faith in response to which God gives us a miracle? It is the miracle of the preservation of faith and life, the miracle of overcoming the terrible and artful designs of the devil, the miracle which helps us to aspire to stars through clouds, overcoming obstacles rising on our way.

I would like to thank you, Your Holiness and Beatitude, for your kind words and for the present. And to thank you, Your Beatitude Savva, and you, Your Beatitude Christopher, and all the venerable representatives of Local Orthodox Churches, the Church of Ukraine and Holy Mount Athos, and all those who addressed kind words to me today.

My soul was especially warmed by the conciliar Liturgy with a multitude of representatives of the episcopate of the Russian Church, with you, my dear eminences, with each carrying out his service at his place at an important time. It depends on you how strong will be the faith of our people, how strong will be their prayer, how strong will be their trust that we all will be saved through God's grace. I would like to thank all of you as well as our remarkable clergy and laity present here for participation in my modest celebration on the occasion of, I would not say 'jubilee' because it is biblically wrong, but my milestone birthday. In recent times, a tradition has been established whereby at least after fifty years of age each date multiple of 5 is celebrated in a more or less visible way. So thank you for coming on this day to the First Capital City of Moscow to pray together in the presence of so many people of God and to experience once again during this repast our brotherhood, our unity, power and the joy of our communion.