



## **Patriarch Kirill celebrates in central square in Kishinev**

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On October 9, 2011, the Day of the Repose of St. John the Theologian and the Commemoration Day of St. Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the central square of Kishinev, the capital of Moldova.

He was assisted by a great assembly of hierarchs and clergy. Present at the service were M. Lupu, acting president of the Republic of Moldova, V. Filat, prime minister of Moldova, V. Kuzmin, Russian ambassador to Moldova, and V. Legoida, head of the Synodal information departments.

After the reading of the Gospel, His Holiness Kirill delivered a sermon. Greeting the primate of the Russian Orthodox Church after the service, Metropolitan Vladimir spoke about the present situation of the Orthodox Church in Moldova. For the last 20 years, the Church in Moldova has opened over 1100 parishes (in total there are some 1300 parishes in the country) and opened and restored 42 monasteries and 8 sketes. In this period, Metropolitan Vladimir himself has ordained 1174 priests. Eight theological schools have been opened and some 500 liturgical books have been published. There is a church in almost every village, and there are a priest and a psalm-reader in every church. The basics of Orthodoxy are taught in almost 800 schools. According to Metropolitan Vladimir, Orthodox Christians make up 90%-93% of the population in Moldova. There is a bishop for every half million faithful and a priest for every 1800-2000 faithful. Pastoral care is also given to the faithful living outside the country, for instance, there are 21 Moldavian priests serving in Italy.

Then Patriarch Kirill addressed the congregation. Presenting Metropolitan Vladimir with a pectoral icon, he said, 'The hardest periods in your people's life fell precisely upon the years of your governance, and you proved to have the wisdom and faithfulness to God and the Church to preserve the unity of your flock and to make a substantial contribution to the life of both the people and the state'. His Holiness gave each bishop of the Metropolia of Moldova a copy of the Gospel in Moldavian. He also instructed them to distribute to each parish copies of the liturgical Gospels in Moldavian and Church Slavonic published for the occasion as a patriarchal gift to the Metropolia with the support of the Department for External Church Relations.

His Holiness Kirill expressed the regret that his visit had to be limited to Kishinev and the hope that he would be able to visit each diocese of the Orthodox Church in Moldova in the future.

He gave to Kishinev's cathedral a Shroud of the Virgin. When in the Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ,

he blessed the newlyweds and addressed them with words of encouragement. He gave each couple an icon of our Saviour or the Mother of God.

*Patriarchal Press Service/DECR Communication Service*

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