



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill begins his primatial visit to Ukraine

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On 26 July 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia began his primatial visit to Ukraine.

That same day in the afternoon the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church met with the Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich at the presidential summer residence in the Crimea.

In the evening, His Holiness arrived in Kiev. Meeting him at Borispol airport were His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, Metropolitans Agafangel of Odessa and Izmail, Ioannikiy of Lugansk and Alchevsk, Onufriy of Chernovtsy and Bukovina, other hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and Ukrainian vice premier S. Tigipko.

During his short meeting with the mass media, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill spoke of the objectives of his pastoral visit to Ukraine, saying that the visit is timed to the celebration of the Baptism of Russia. “The festivities in Kiev this year will be most joyful, as I shall celebrate Divine Liturgy together with His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Patriarch-Catholicos of All Georgia, and with His Beatitude Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine. Nay time I come to Ukraine and elsewhere, people ask me about the reasons. My answer is usually the same: the main reason is pray together with people. Sometimes those asking are satisfied with my answer, but I hope that soon enough they will understand. Indeed, a patriarch, like any ordained minister, has a single purpose – to proclaim salvation, to bring people to God, to awake their conscience and bring the greatest Gospel truths closer to their perception of the world. The Church exists for the sake of this very purpose.

“The Church unites all people, including those living in Ukraine. I am happy to pray with the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and with pious worshippers,” His Holiness said and particularly dwelled upon the forthcoming meeting with His Holiness and Beatitude Iliya II, Patriarch-Catholicos of All Georgia. According to the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, the two Local Churches have been recently engaged in ‘a particularly intensive dialogue.’ His Holiness continued to say, “We have an intensive exchange of delegations, participate in the feasts and conduct very active talks with the Georgian Church as with, perhaps, no other Local Orthodox Church.”

“There are certain difficulties in relations between Russian and Georgia, but there are no principal

disagreements between the two sister Churches, - His Holiness underscored. – We do hope that the Orthodox Church, like spiritual locomotives, will help to overcome difficulties in the relations between the states. We hope that the Church will be faithful to their vocation, proclaiming peace and calling people to unity.”

His Holiness proceeded to the Dormition Laura of the Caves and was met at the Near Caves by the abbot, Metropolitan Pavel of Vyshgorod and Chernobyl, the brethren, and many worshippers.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, accompanied by His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir, visited the Church of the Exaltation of the Cross, where he venerated the icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God., and then addressed the

worshippers.

Later, he met with His Holiness and Beatitude Patriarch-Catholics Iliya II of All Georgia at the Synodal hall.

The official delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church includes Metropolitan Varsonofiy of Saransk and Mordovia, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate; Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Administrative Secretariat; archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations; Mr. Vladimir Legoida, chairman of the Synodal Information Department; archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox Relations, and other persons.