



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill takes part in the opening ceremony of Slavonic Unity Festival

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On 25 June 2011, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in Bryansk and proceeded to the juncture of borders of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine to take part in the opening ceremony of the “Slavonic Unity-2011” International Festival.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated a prayer service at the memorial cross near the Monument of Friendship.

Governor of the Bryansk region Nikolai Denin declared the festival open; national anthems of the Russian Federation, the Republics of Belarus and Ukraine were performed; and national flags were hoisted.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia delivered a welcoming address. Greetings from the State Duma speaker Boris Gryzlov were read out.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented at the ceremony by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, Archbishop Aristarkh of Gomel and Zhlobin, Archbishop Amvrosiy of Chernigov and Novgorod-Severskiy, Bishop Sofroniy of Mogilev and Mstislavl, Bishop Feofilakt of Bryansk and Sevsk; Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchates’ Administrative Secretariat; Bishop Evlogiy of Sumy and Akhtyrka, and Bishop Leonid of Rechitsa, a vicar of the Gomel diocese.

The first meeting of the representatives of the Bryansk (Russia), Gomel (Belarus) and Chernigov (Ukraine) regions took place at the village of Novye Yurkovichi, Bryansk region, in 1969. The Monument of Friendship was erected there in 1975 to mark the 30th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War.

A memorial cross was erected near the monument with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II in 1995.

Heads of the legislative assemblies of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine attended the festival in 1999 and 2002; His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II – in 2001, and presidents of the three states – in 2004.

In November 2010, the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church met at the juncture of the borders of the three states. They were Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Archbishop Amvrosiy of Chernigov and Novgorod-Severskiy, Bishop Feofilakt of Bryansk and Sevsk, and Bishop Leonid of Rechitsa, a vicar of the Gomel diocese. Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated a prayer service at the memorial cross for the wellbeing of the three fraternal nations.

By tradition, the Bryansk, Gomel and Chernigov regions host the festival in rotation. This year it was the Bryansk region, Russia.

That same day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill met with the leadership of the three regions and with the ruling hierarchs of the three dioceses not far from the monument at the Klimovo district, Bryansk region.

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