Patriarch Kirill: It is a joyful day for the whole Church of Holy Rus' today

A grand reception took place on November 23, 2010, in Kiev in honour of His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine who marks his 75th birthday today.

Present at the reception were Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, representatives of Local Orthodox Church, state officials of Ukraine, Russia and other countries and ambassadors.

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed Metropolitan Vladimir which the following greetings:

> "A man who bears a high responsibility in a Church can receive no greater support than people's prayer. And we felt this prayer today when a multitude of people who gathered together lifted up prayers for their spiritual father.
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> Everyone has some capital. Some collect money all their lives, while others valuables, still others invest their funds in property and still others buy shares, and this list can be continued. People take care of their welfare. But the Church does nothing of that, and the Primate of a Church does none of things done by ordinary people to consolidate their position. A man vested with responsibility in a Church lives as it were contrary to human logic. And what does he receive in response – he receives the love of people who reach out their arms and hearts, who share their material resources with the Church, who help and support the Church.
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> The principal capital accumulated by a minister, especially a hierarch of the Church, is the capital of people's love. It is not liable to either devaluation or inflation or crises because this capital lies where sinful human hands cannot reach it. You have accumulated this spiritual capital, Your Beatitude. It is a great capital incommensurate with the capital of billionaires. Your capital is the love of people, the love of clergy, the love of the nation, the tears in eyes of the people who have prayed for you today; and my heart is rejoicing in it. In the life of the Primate of a Church, there are not many joyful days. But it is a joyful day today in my life because I can see a great fruit which is offered to God through the selfless service of the Church of God.

God willing, the prayer of your fellow-hierarchs, clergy and the people of God – the Orthodox Ukrainian people who are united in solidarity around you, the people who safeguard the great spiritual tradition of Holy Rus' – will never weaken so that we may preserve the unity of our Church to which you have made such a great contribution. Through this unity we can feel spiritual power, through it we go beyond our national and ethnic limits, through it we develop an ecumenical vision and enter a divine ecumenical perspective. We begin to understand that the true struggle is the struggle between God and the forces of darkness, and in this struggle we are on the side of God.

The ways in which the human civilization is developing today are not easy. There is a great deal of temptations, deceptions, hypocrisy and lies around us, and the Church is probably people's last hope. We should not let them down. We should not throw it to those who squander the great spiritual treasure like a coin.

May many good years be to the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine!"

The hierarchs who came for the celebrations from Local Orthodox Churches extended congratulations to Metropolitan Vladimir on behalf of their Primates. They noted the special contribution he made to the preservation and consolidation of Orthodoxy in Ukraine. Thus, Metropolitan Jeremiah of Switzerland (Patriarchate of Constantinople) said that 'the preservation and replenishment of the flock of the canonical Church in Ukraine has been the main component of the long ministry of His Beatitude Vladimir's'.

Metropolitan Vladimir thanked all those present for their warm words.

Concluding the reception, Patriarch Kirill addressed the representatives of Local Orthodox Church in English, saying, 'Your participation in this event is a great support for the mission of His Beatitude and the mission of the entire Orthodox people in Ukraine to preserve the Orthodox tradition of Holy Rus'.

Patriarch Kirill made a special mention of the fact that among the participants in the celebrations were archpastors who served in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Moldova. 'It is our common event because his 75th birthday is marked by a man who has worked perhaps more than others to preserve the unity and prosperity of our Church. Today it is really a great and joyful day for the entire Church of Holy Rus', he said, the Patriarchal Press Service has reported.

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