



## **75th birthday of His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev is solemnly celebrated in Kiev**

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On 22 November 2010 in the evening, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia took part in the celebration of the 75th birthday of His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine. The event was held at the building of National Opera of Ukraine in Kiev.

Taking part in the celebration were bishops and clerics of the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches, delegations from the Local Orthodox Churches, and representatives of state authorities and public circles of Ukraine.

Speaker of the Supreme Rada V. Litvin read out greetings from the Ukrainian President V. Yanukovich, congratulated Metropolitan Vladimir on behalf of the Supreme Rada, and awarded him with honorary diploma "For special merits before Ukrainian people."

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia read out an official patriarchal address and said:

"The most important thing in your life is your ministry to church unity, a crown of your long and creative life. This ministry demands special qualities of a church servant whom the Lord entrusted with a special responsibility of building up the unity of His Body...Following the example of Christ the Saviour, each hierarch as an image of the Saviour in the community of believers, and the Primate in particular, should always sacrifice himself for the good of his flock, for preservation of peace, and for overcoming of human differences. We see the real results of your bearing the cross of the Lord, namely, the unity of bishops, clergymen and laity uniting around you, and also love of the pious people of the entire Orthodox Russia."

The Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church awarded His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine with the Order of Glory and Honour, 1st class, in consideration of his outstanding contribution to the building up of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the strengthening of church unity, and in connection with his 75th birthday.

Metropolitan Agafangel of Odessa and Izmail read out the congratulatory address of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to Metropolitan Vladimir and handed in the highest award of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – the Order of St. Andrew the First-Called, No. 1.

His Beatitude said: "I never had anything more important in my life than the Church and the Motherland. I have served them all my life and shall serve as long as the Lord grants me. I have always been guided by the commandments of Christ the Saviour and have followed them. It is only love that heals infirmities and bring us closer to God."

A concert was performed after the official part of the festive evening. The programme included Ukrainian folk songs and classical music, including an excerpt from Metropolitan Hilarion's "St Matthew Passion" Oratorio.

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