Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Vladimir celebrate Divine Liturgy at the Dormition Laura of the Caves in Kiev

On July 28, the commemoration day of St. Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles and the Day of the Baptism of Rus', His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Dormition Laura of the Caves in Kiev. The liturgy took place in the monastery's square overcrowded with worshippers. The service was broadcast live by the Ukrainian television.

After the Lesser Entrance, Patriarch Kirill elevated Archbishop Alexander of Kazakhstan and Astana to the rank of metropolitan in keeping with to the Holy Synod's decision defining the canonical and legal state of the metropolitanate in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

After the reading of the Gospel the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church delivered a sermon.
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After the liturgy, Metropolitan Vladimir greeted Patriarch Kirill saying:

> 'Your Holiness, the Most Holy Master and Father,
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> Dear Archpastors and all of you present here:
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> I greet you on the occasion of the feast day of our Church, our history, our Orthodox faith.
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> Your Holiness, you have come to Ukraine again, and we hope it has been a regular visit and now will await our next meeting here. Thank you for the prayer you have led in these days in Ukraine and thank you for the sermons and edification which people have heard in churches and through the mass media. Thank you for your trips deserving every commendation, which, whatever journalists may invent, are pastoral visitations undertaken out of concern for the salvation of people's souls…
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> 'We believe that through your prayers the Lord will settle everything for the best and we believe that thanks to your visit to Ukraine we have advanced a little further in developing spirituality and building devotional life. Everybody has listened to you attentively. It deserves praise. Thank God!

‘Committed to the Lord since your childhood, being a son of a priest, you set us an example of prayer, defense of the holy Orthodox faith and work to make people understand whence they have come, whither they go and where they will be. You have devoted all your talents and abilities to the service of the Church of Christ and the preaching of the holy Gospel. Looking at you and at your virtuous life and work, we themselves try to brace up and go up a step higher.

‘You are heard with pleasure when you address scientists and politicians and when you speak from the church pulpit. Wherever you speak and stay, the place comes to be filled with meaning and significance. You speak brilliantly and clearly about truths and rules to be observed in order to achieve what every person is called to, especially a Christian.

‘May the Lord preserve and defend and guide you as He did and does, while we will pray at Kiev’s shrines that the Lord may continue giving you good health, tremendous ability to work and devotion in preaching the holy Gospel. Through your God-given word, work and love of the Church you reveal the Gospel to those who are near and those who are far.

‘May the Lord’s blessing be with you in life and righteous work and in your standing on divine guard for as many years as the Lord will ordain. I hope you will *rightly define the word of Christ’s truth* for long years.

‘Let the Church makes marry and rejoice in having such a golden-mouthed source, having answers to all questions and, most importantly, preaching the Gospel to those who are near and those who are far for the glory of God for the sake of salvation for each of us’.

As a token of sharing in prayer, Metropolitan Vladimir presented Patriarch Kirill with a mitre. Then His Holiness the Patriarch spoke in response to Metropolitan Vladimir, saying:

‘I cordially thank you, Your Beatitude, for your kind and wise words, but most of all I thank you for the feat of your life. Your entire life is a testimony to your devotion of the Church of God and love of your people.

‘You are flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of Ukrainian culture, spiritual energy and zeal for Orthodox faith. In the hardest years the Lord ordained that you lead the Ukrainian Church. To the highest posts of church service the Lord puts those who are needed at a given time in a given place, and it was not accidental that it was you who, at a time of crisis, confusion and temptations which befell the Orthodox in Ukraine, ascended the old chair of Ukrainian

luminaries, combining in your service the past and the present and drawing strength from the one great and powerful past and giving part of this strength to ruined and tormented human souls.

‘I thank you and I will never stop admiring the feat of your service. I visit this holy land with the intentions and aims which are openly declared before those who are near and those who are far. But regrettably the enemy of the human race, whose name is translated into Russian as slanderer, talks slanderously about the most sacred and pure thing, which is pastoral service, common prayer and the word of the gospel.

‘We should not be afraid of slander because God is stronger than devil. But we have to respond to some slanderous insinuations intended to sow new thorns of enmity and suspicion in the one Russian Church.

‘So, to all those who are slow in the uptake, to all the deaf and the blind and to all those who have lost memory I would like to say that the word of the Church is gold just as the world of a hierarchs is gold. The Church never goes back on her words, and when by the mouth of a Local Council the status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as self-governed Church with the rights of extensive autonomy was approved, it was not approved to be cancelled.

‘The Church does not break her word. But we know of examples when church ministers went back on their words and after that died spiritually themselves and dragged others into an abyss. They say the Patriarch comes to Ukraine to restrict the rights and resources of the Primate of the Ukrainian Church. The Patriarch comes not for it but for bearing witness – together with the Primate of the Ukrainian Church, the episcopate of our whole Church, with Ukrainians, Russians, Moldavians and people of other nationalities – before the world and here in Ukraine too to Christ crucified and risen, to Christ capable of giving the power of resurrection even to the greatest of sinners.

‘This is why we once again address our words to those who are in schism. The love of Christ extends to all, and the servants of this love cannot do what is opposite to the word of God. For this reason we will build relations with our brothers who are in schism on the basis of truth – church truth and divine truth, on one hand, and on the basis of love, on the other. And even those who sin most of all should not lose hope for salvation because the Saviour went up on the cross for the sake of all. He poured His blood not so much on righteous people as sinners. Therefore, when we speak to those who are near and those who are far and even those who tear apart the body of the Church, we do not say empty words, we do not speak in riddles, we do not speak in the language of diplomacy, but we speak in the language of the Gospel.

‘Again and again I call upon all to unite in one Body of Christ so that we could together glorify the name of God with the hope that this common prayer will incline to us the mercy of God.

‘Your Beatitude, today we are happy to celebrate your saint’s day. Providentially, the Primate of the Ukrainian Church bears the name of Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles. There are no such coincidences. It is not a coincidence, for it is the finger of God pointing at you as a worthy successor of the Kievan Primates of the Church – the metropolitans who succeeded Prince Vladimir himself and his feat equal to that of the apostles. You are Vladimir by name, and you are equal to the apostles by life as you assert the unity of the Church and the entire heritage of Kievan Rus’ in all the vast lands of the Russian world – the world, here I speak again to those who are slow in the uptake, which has nothing to do with politics or power. It is the world in which the saints of the one Church and the feat equal to that of the apostles have lived and worked through centuries. It is spiritual power that unites people beyond any political divisions, making one of many – one spiritual family, which is the Church of God standing before God in prayer and hope’.

Patriarch Kirill presented Metropolitan Vladimir with a pectoral cross and two pectoral icons and gave the monastery the Eucharistic vessels as ˝symbols of our spiritual power that is born from the Body and Blood of the Saviour, from the power which can defeat every diabolical power expressed in divisions, slender and falsehood. May the brethren, united around this holy Cup, pray for the unity of our Church, our faith and devotion of the Ukrainian people and all the peoples of holy Rus’˝.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/56883/