Russian and Ukrainian Presidents venerate holy sites of the Laura of the Caves in Kiev

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On 17 May 2010, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on his official visit and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich visited the Dormition Laura of the Caves in Kiev.

The heads of the Russian and Ukrainian states were met at the monastery by His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine; Metropolitan Pitirim of Nikolaev and Voznesensk; abbot of the Laura Archbishop Pavel of Vyshgorod; rector of the Kiev Theological Academy Archbishop Antoniy of Borispol; Bishop Aleksandr of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky; and Bishop Panteleimon of Vasilkov.

Presidents Medvedev and Yanukovich venerated the icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God in the Church of the Exaltation of the Cross. The Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church celebrated a prayer service before the icon that usually rests atop the Holy Doors of the ancient iconostasis but was lowered on special straps for the occasion in accordance with the instituted custom. 'Many Years' was said after the prayer service to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and to His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine wit6h their flock protected by God, and to 'Dmitry and Viktor, the heads of our states saved by God.'

In his welcoming speech His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir said, "By the grace of God, you have arrived today to the ancient Kievan Laura of the Caves, which had undergone many trials and destruction and been revived. Resting here are the incorruptible relics of 120 holy zealots of piety. We believe in their prayers for all of us and especially for those who guide human minds and hearts. This kind of ministry is not easy, and we share it by praying for you, interceding for you before God, and wishing you all the best. May you hearken to your heart in all your undertakings, and may you succeed in your work done for the good of people and to the glory of God."

His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir presented President Medvedev with a facsimile edition of the Peresopnitsa Book of the Gospels and an icon of St. Theodosius of the Caves, expressing his wish for the prayers of the saint to be always with the head of the Russian State. President Yanukovich was presented with an icon of St. Anthony of the Caves.

President Medvedev presented a cope of the Vladimir Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God to the Laura.

The Presidents venerated the Icon of the Dormition of the Mother of God while the choir was singing

"Beneath thy mercy, O Virgin Mother of God" and proceeded to the Near Caves, where they prayed in the cell of the monastery's founder St. Anthony of the Caves and venerated the precious relics of the miracle-workers of the Caves Ss Agapit of the Caves, Elias of Murom, Nestor the Chronicler, and other holy fathers resting in the Near Caves.

His Beatitude Vladimir invited high guests to tea served at the house of the Laura's abbot.

President Medvedev was accompanied by the chief of Russian Presidential Administration Sergei Naryshkin and deputy chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations archpriest Nikolai Balashov.

President Yanukovich was accompanied by the chief of the Ukrainian Presidential Administration S. Levochkin.

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