



On the day of Ukrainian presidential inauguration Patriarch Kirill and Metropolitan Vladimir hold a service of thanksgiving at Kiev Laura of the Caves

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On February 25, 2010, the day of the Ukrainian presidential inauguration, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine held a service of thanksgiving at the refectory church of the Dormition Laura of the Caves in Kiev. They lifted up prayers for the Ukrainian people and the elected head of the Ukrainian state.

In the morning of February 25, Patriarch Kirill venerated the shrines of the Laura's Near Caves, where the relics of numerous men of God who had shown forth in the monastery lie in rest.

After that His Holiness Kirill and His Beatitude Vladimir welcomed Ukrainian President-elect Victor Yanukovich to the Laura's refectory church.

During the prayer service, a special petition was voiced for the head of the state that 'power and wisdom may be given him from heaven to be a good ruler of the country and to bring in peace and good order to it'.

In conclusion of the service, Patriarch Kirill read a prayer for the Ukrainian president who was taking office, asking the Lord: 'Give him good judgment and admonish him to carry out his great service without stumbling and give him wisdom to keep the Ukrainian people in peace and without sorrow'.

Then the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church addressed himself to Mr. Yanukovich with the words of greetings:

'Your Excellency, Highly Esteemed Victor Fyodorovich:

In the ancient walls of the Kiev Laura of the Caves, from which Holy Rus' has generated, we have now prayed that the Lord may bless your taking the office of the Ukrainian President.

The religious understanding of power is associated with service. There is no meaning in human power other than service. True power is always linked with responsibility and deed including the deed of spirituality because to serve one's neighbours always means to dedicate oneself and sometimes even to

crucify oneself for the benefit of those you are called to serve.

That is why the service in power demands so much spiritual and physical resources, wisdom, patience, strength and humbleness. One cannot fully fulfill this God's order to those who assume power, relying only on one's own physical and intellectual resources and on one's will. That is why believers who come into power always begin this good task with a prayer asking for God's help. And today we have prayed to the Lord and Saviour, to His Most Holy Mother, to the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles, to your heavenly patron, the Holy Martyr Victor, and to the saints of the Kiev Caves that they may be with you in your carrying out the important service of Ukraine.

It is God's will that people *may have life, and have it to the full* (Jn. 10:10). This fullness of human life is determined by a number of conditions, and every one knows that the primary one of these conditions is the Kingdom of God. But if we refer to social life, to the life of the people, the indispensable condition for any welfare is the unity of the people, their ability to rally around the meeting of the hardest challenges. We are aware of how hard are the most important tasks facing the Ukrainian people today. And therefore it is certainly the will of God that the people be united, that differences – political, historiosophic, cultural, religious – be surmounted, that a common spiritual basis for the common life of the Ukrainian people be found.

We believe that this spiritual basis can be found only in those values which have been fostered by Ukraine's whole spiritual tradition. If these values are put in the basis of societal life the Lord will certainly show mercy for the country and the people.

There is another value. It is the great heritage of the Kievan Rus', the great heritage of Prince Vladimir. The fraternal nations tied together by one historical tradition are heirs of the most holy prince equal to the apostles. And it is so important that these component parts of one Holy Rus' be always tied by the bonds of friendship, peace and cooperation. This is certainly the will of God, for the Lord was pleased to see a powerful tree of the Orthodox Eastern European Christian civilization developing from the seed sown here, on Kiev hills.

We also see as symbolic the fact that you take the presidential office on the commemoration day of St. Alexis the Metropolitan of Kiev, Moscow and All Russia, a guardian of the spiritual space of Holy Rus'. God willing, you will direct your effort to the prosperity of Ukraine, the preservation of her people and the spiritual space of Holy Rus', the prosperity of your homeland to which you are committed and to which you have made ardent vows.

I would like to conclude this word of greetings with the remarkable words of the Ukrainian people's prayer: 'O great Lord, who is one, preserve Rus'-Ukraine!' May the Lord preserve you for many good

years. May the Lord preserve Rus'-Ukraine. May the Lord preserve the sacred heritage of Holy Rus'. Amen'.

And His Holiness the Patriarch blessed the Ukrainian President-elect with an icon of the Saviour.

Mr. Yanukovich, speaking in response, said:

'Your Holiness, Your Beatitude:

I am very grateful to you for the prayer with which you gave a valedictory to me and to Ukraine. I am confident that the Ukrainian people will overcome all the difficulties on their path, all the challenges of the time which the Lord has given us these days. We will overcome it and will be united. The Ukrainian people are strong, the Ukrainian soil is rich, and the Ukrainian people are industrious. With the faith in our Lord God Jesus Christ we hope that we will have enough resources of our own to overcome all the difficulties for the sake of our Fatherland, for the sake of our children and grand children and to build a strong state which will enjoy respect in the world. And may the Lord God help us in this'.

Then the President-elect proceeded to the Ukrainian Supreme Rada for the inauguration to begin at 10.00 local time.

On the same day, when the Church celebrates the Icon of Our Lady of Iveron and the memory of St. Alexis the Metropolitan of Kiev, Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts at the Laura's refectory church.

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