



Patriarch Kirill arrives in Kiev

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia arrived in Kiev in the evening of February 24, 2010, on the invitation of Ukrainian President-elect Victor Yanukovich.

The official delegation accompanying His Holiness includes Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Bishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's administrative secretariat, and Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman.

Patriarch Kirill was welcomed at Borispol airport by His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine, Ukrainian Foreign Minister P. Poroshenko, Supreme Rada Deputy N. Azarov, member of the Party of the Regions' political council, Russian Ambassador in Ukraine M. Zurabov, and hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Upon his arrival, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church made a brief statement for the press, saying in particular, 'I have come to Kiev on the invitation of Victor Fyodorovich Yanukovich in order to pray for Ukraine, to pray for the elected president tomorrow within the historic walls of the Kievan Laura of the Caves, from which the Russian Church originated, from which the great spiritual tradition of Kievan Rus' originated. We will ask the Lord to show mercy for this land bearing a great mark of God's anointment, which has been left on it through the Kievan baptismal font.

'Kiev – the mother of Russian cities, the Ukrainian land which has seen hard times – is given today, through the intercession of the saint of the Kievan Caves, an opportunity to overcome problems facing the country and the people. And the Church will help along in all possible ways, both by prayers and good works'.

On February 25, the day of the inauguration of the fourth Ukrainian President, His Holiness Kirill and His Beatitude Vladimir will hold a thanksgiving service at the refectory church of the Kiev Laura of the Caves. Mr. Yanukovich is expected to attend.

After the service, the President-elect will proceed to the Ukrainian Supreme Rada for the inauguration to begin at 10.00 local time.

On the same day, when the Church honours the Icon of Our Lady of Iveron and the memory of St. Alexis the Metropolitan of Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill will celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified

Gifts at the Laura's refectory church, the patriarchal press service has reported.

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