"Orthodox Russia – towards the Day of National Unity" Church and Public Exhibition: His Holiness Patriarch Kirill leads the opening ceremony

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On 4 November 2009, the feast day of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God and the Day of National Unity, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia led the opening ceremony of the 8th church and public exhibition "Orthodox Russia – towards the Day of National Unity." The exhibition will be opened in the "Manezh" exhibition hall from November 4 through 8.

That same day the Pochaev Icon of the Mother of God was brought to Moscow by a delegation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church lead by His Beatitude Metropolitan Vladimir of Kiev and All Ukraine. People can venerate the icon during the exhibition working days.

The opening ceremony followed the Divine Liturgy celebrated by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church at the Church of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God on Red Square.

After the divine service His Holiness led the procession of the youth taking part in which were students of the Moscow educational institutions, representatives of youth organizations and Cossacks, as well as sisters of charity.

They were greeted at the Manezh Square by the head of the presidential administration S. Naryshkin who read out a message of the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia underscored in his welcoming speech that he addressed the audience not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of the traditional religions of Russia, which are working together with the Russian Orthodox Church for the sake of spiritual and moral revival of the country and its people and for the strengthening of the Motherland. He said further, "We celebrate the Day of National Unity established in commemoration of the liberation of Moscow from foreign invaders in 1612. The victory was not only a military one. It put an end to the Time of Troubles, and we celebrate the historic victory of our people over it. […]

"It is not fortuitous that November 4, the feast day of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God, was proclaimed the Day of National Unity. It shows that we are learning the lessons of the past, that we shall not allow civil disturbance, that brother will never kill brother, and that we shall never put our own

interests above the interests of the entire nation.

"It is time to combine our efforts, it is time for reconciliation and unity. Neither religious, nor ethnical differences can divide our people. People are divided by sin, destruction of moral guide, and disappearance of moral values.

"We celebrate today in the hope to be strong enough to overcome our difficulties together and to replace unhealthy competition and conflicts with solidarity and ability to solve the tasks facing our people."

His Holiness called the opening of the exhibition on the Day of National Unity symbolic and reminded the audience that in the old times people who parted for a long time cut a coin or another object – "a symbol," and each took a piece so that when they met again they could put the pieces together as a sign of loyalty and unity. "May God grant this national holiday to be a symbol for us by which we could find a kindred spirit in one another and perceive ourselves as the one multinational people of Russia."

Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov underscored in his speech at the opening ceremony that our history showed the necessity of the unity.

Representatives of the traditional religions of Russia also took part in the opening ceremony.

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