



His Holiness Patriarch Kirill celebrates Liturgy at the Lavra of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius on the commemoration day of the saint



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On July 18, on the commemoration day of the uncovering of the venerable relics of St. Sergius, hegumen of Radonezh (1422), His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' celebrated the Divine Liturgy on the Lavra's Cathedral square, Patriarchal press service reports.

The festive service was celebrated in front of the venerated icon of St. Sergius at the altar under the canopy on the platform installed in front of the Lavra's Cathedral of the Dormition on the Cathedral square especially for the feast.

Concelebrating with His Holiness were twenty-four metropolitans and an assembly of the hierarchs of

the Russian Orthodox Church, the Lavra's and its metochions' brethren in holy orders; as well as Moscow clergymen, including protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov, Patriarch's secretary for Moscow.

Taking part in the service were hierarchs and clergy of the Local Orthodox Churches, including Metropolitan Niphon of Philippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; Bishop Stefan of Remesiana, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'; archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Moscow Patriarchal Throne; and archpriest Daniel Andreyuk, representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Moscow Patriarchal Throne.

Among those attending the service were Mr. Sergei A. Pakhomov, chairman of the State Duma Committee on construction and housing and communal services; Mr. Dmitry A. Akulov, head of the Sergiev Posad municipal district of the Moscow region; Mr. Vadim V. Mikhailov, the first deputy managing director of the Russian Railways; and Mrs. Yelena O. Serova, a space pilot and Hero of Russia.

Also present were Major General Alexei Salnikov, Deputy Chief of the Main Military-Political Directorate of the National Guard Troops Federal Service of the Russian Federation, and officers of the Russian National Guard who were involved in organizing festive events dedicated to the commemoration day of St. Sergius of Radonezh. They set up a tent camp for pilgrims and volunteers, provided folding beds and bedding, and set up field kitchen for serving hot meals.

The protection of public order during the several thousand strong foot procession with the cross called "From the Sovereign to the Saint" was provided by the employees of the Extradepartmental protection directorate, the 'Peresvet' department of special police force, and the Central regional unit of the Russian National Guard.

The abbesses of stauropegic convents, monastics, the participants in the "From the Sovereign to the Saint" procession with the cross, and numerous pilgrims prayed during the service.

The liturgical chants were sung by the joint choir of the Lavra and the Moscow theological academy conducted by hieromonk Nestor (Volkov).

The patriarchal service was broadcast live on the Soyuz and Spas TV channels, and also on Patriarchia.ru, the official website of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Special petitions were offered at the Litany of Fervent Supplication; His Holiness Patriarch Kirill read a

prayer for Holy Rus'.

At the end of the Liturgy, His Holiness, members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the hierarchs who arrived in the Lavra for the commemoration day, celebrated a prayer service to the Hegumen of the Russian Land, after which Bishop Kirill of Sergiev Posad and Dmitrov addressed His Holiness the Patriarch with the words of welcome.

Standing on the platform on the Cathedral square, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church delivered his primatial address to the worshippers:

'Dear hierarchs, reverend fathers, brothers and sisters!

'On this special day for our Church and, I dare say, for our Fatherland, I would like to cordially welcome you all here, at the site of ascetic labours of St. Sergius.

'The example of St. Sergius testifies to the power of God, because it is said that "God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Mt 3:9). He can turn a humble monk into the leader of a big nation able to inspire people to struggle in the midst of hard times and convince them that the Fatherland will win. All understood that St. Sergius called them to fight for the sake of salvation. The faith in his prophetic power, his piety, and his deeds inspired Russian troops and brought them to the Kulikovo field, where they won a victory. By the prayers of St. Sergius, our warriors defended our country and drove the enemy away.

'Sometimes, secular scientists use capabilities assessment for analyzing historical events. So, our army could not defeat the enemy at that time. That is why even the critical-minded historians have profound respect for St. Sergius and, of course, for the courage and heroism of our soldiers, who won a real victory over the enemy. This story shows that "God's power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). But what about weakness? If weakness comes from our laziness, reluctance to learn or to accomplish a feat, then there is no use of it, but only harm both for a lazy one and those around him.

'However, the Lord always helps those who strive to achieve results. We must understand that God's grace does not automatically make us Abraham's children and grant us victory. Therefore, we must not forget that we are responsible for the results. This concerns not only fateful battles or some moments in history, but also many moments in our personal and professional life and activity, as well as our service to the Lord and the Church.

'So, we trust in God's will, beseech His grace and work arduously to have it. It is very relevant nowadays. The events happening in the world are frightening. We see a real apostasy, the abandoning

of God and of the Divine commandments. Moreover, there is a wish to build a powerful universal civilization without God, without any hope in God's Providence and rely only on one's own strength. We know from the Old Testament that all such attempts, including the construction of the Tower of Babel, had failed. But any attempt to create a prosperous world by ousting God is useless. I am happy to see that even more people begin to understand it. Their faith becomes firm on the basis on their personal experience. Indeed, hardly anything can be done without God.

May God grant us, I want to say again, to preserve by His grace the true sovereignty of our country, its freedom and independence, and thus ensure its spiritual and material prosperity. This ought to be our today's prayer.

Dear bishops, during these crucial times the Lord destined you and me to consecrate our lives to archpastoral service. Dear reverend fathers, I remind you of this so that all of you fulfil their pastoral ministry with audacity, doing everything in your power. I call our faithful people to keep the Orthodox faith and try to arrange your personal, family, state and social life in accordance with God's law in order to have Divine aid in everything we are doing.

May the Lord, through the prayers of our holy God-bearing father Sergius, hegumen of Radonezh and Miracle Worker, keep our land, our Church, our rulers, and our people from all evil. Amen.'

Then His Holiness Patriarch Kirill proceeded to the Cathedral of the Trinity, where he venerated the venerable relics of St. Sergius and the icon of the Holy Trinity painted by St. Andrei Rublev. His Holiness also venerated the shrines at the Serapion's Chamber.

The Primate of the Russian Church had a brief talk with the participants in the "Fellowship of Orthodox Youth" international congress which is taking place in Sergiev Posad these days. Orthodox young people presented His Holiness with a wood carved Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God.

His Holiness awarded hierarchs and clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church who celebrate memorable dates this year. The ceremony took place at the Throne Hall of the Patriarchal Chambers.

According to tradition, festive hierarchal services on the commemoration day of St. Sergius of Radonezh are celebrated in the churches of the Lavra and of the Moscow theological schools. Metropolitan Dimitry of Tobolsk and Tyumen officiated at the Divine Liturgy in the church of the Intercession at the Academy; Metropolitan Rostisav of Tomsk and Asino celebrated in the church of St. John Climacus.