



Representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches attend festivities for the 445th anniversary of the appearance of the Kazan icon of Our Lady



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On 21st July 20204 on the Fourth Sunday after Pentecost and the feast of the apparition of the icon of the Most holy mother of God in the city of Kazan, prayerful festivities in the capital of Tatarstan were headed by the Patriarchal exarch of All Belarus the metropolitan of Minsk and Zaslavl Benjamin, the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the east to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia the metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon and the metropolitan of Kazan and Tatarstan Kirill.

In the morning in the Annunciation Cathedral of the Kazan Kremlin before the venerated copy of the Kazan icon of Our Lady which was brought to Kazan from the Vatican in 2005 a short prayer service was held. There was then held a procession of the cross throughout the city to the place of the discovery of the miraculous icon which is now the Kazan Cathedral within the male monastery of the Mother of

God, reports the website of the Tatarstan metropolitanate.

As the people taking part in the procession of the cross arrived, the celebration began of the Divine Liturgy in the Kazan Cathedral. The festive service was attended by the metropolitan of Yoshkar-Ola and Mari John; the metropolitan of Kurgan and Beloozero Daniel; the chairman of the Synodal department for interaction with the armed forces and law enforcement agencies and chairman of the Synodal committee for interaction with the Cossack community the metropolitan of Stavropol and Nevinnomyssk Kirill; the metropolitan of Orenburg and Saraktash Peter; the metropolitan of Chita and Petrovsk-Zabaikal Dimitrius; the metropolitan of Volgograd and Kamyshin Theodore; the metropolitan of Pskov and Porkhov Arsenius; the chairman of the Synodal department for religious education and catechism the metropolitan of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturie Yevgeny; the metropolitan of Chelyabinsk and Miassa Alexei; the archbishop of Makhachkala and Grozny Varlaam; the bishop of Alexandrov and Yuriev-Polsky Innocent; the bishop of Orsk and Gaia Irenei; the bishop of Chistopol and Nizhnekamsk Pachomius; the bishop of Almetievsk and Bugulma Methodius; the bishop of Georgievsk and Praskoveya Vincent; the bishop of Yenisei and Lesosibirsk Ignatius and the bishop of Troitsk and Yuzhnoural Paul.

Concelebrating with the bishops were the representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky); the representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia archpriest Daniel Andrejuk; the representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of great Antioch and All the East archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev); the rector of the Church of Saint Seraphim of Sarov in Yekaterinburg archimandrite Hermogenes (Yeremeyev); the dean of the parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia in New Zealand archpriest Nikolai Boikov; the secretary of the diocese of Chelyabinsk archpriest Igor Shestakov; inmate of the Saint Nicholas Monastery in the city of Gomel archimandrite Savva (Mazhuko); the secretary of the metropolitanate of Tatarstan hieromonk Kirill (Korytko); the vicar abbot of the Kazan Monastery of the Mother of God hegumen Mark (Vilensky); and the clergy of the metropolitanate and the clergy of those accompanying the bishops to the capital of Tatarstan.

For the convenience of the huge number of faithful who had gathered a screen was erected upon which the festivities were broadcast live. Praying at the Liturgy were the monks and nuns of the diocese of Kazan, numerous parishioners from the churches of the capital of Tatarstan and pilgrims. Among the guests of honour in the cathedral were the prime minister of the Republic of Tatarstan Alexei Pesoshin and the ambassador of Slovakia to Russia Lubomir Regak.

At the Litany of Peace and the Litany of Fervent Supplication prayers were offered up for the Russian army and for peace. At the Litany of the Departed petitions were offered for the repose of the souls of archbishop Jeremiah, who took part in the discovery of the Kazan icon of the Queen of Heaven and

metropolitan Theophanes (Ashurkov), who had laboured for the restoration of the Kazan Cathedral. Prayers were also offered for the reposed bishops of Kazan, abbess Rachael (Yershova) and the sisters of the Kazan Convent.

After the dismissal metropolitan Benjamin delivered a homily to the faithful in which he said: "The apparition of the Kazan icon is known about in various countries. People of various nations have turned to the Most Holy Virgin Mary and prayed before the Kazan icon. And the fact that today a great multitude of pilgrims have gathered from various places testifies that the Mother of God unites us all. Her maternal heart accommodates all people, all countries and peoples. She inspires as all to fervent prayer. May today's feast move each of us to observe God's commandments and accomplish that which is pleasing to the Most Holy Mother of God and her Divine Son Our Lord."

Greetings were then heard from the metropolitan of Philippiopolis Niphon. "We, the representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches to His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill, thank you for the kind invitation to share with you and the people of the blessed city of Kazan the joy of the feast day of the greatly venerated icon of the Mother of God," he said. "Today through our common prayer we have borne witness to the unity of our Churches in the spirit of love and peace. Everybody at some time has to confront the challenges of the modern world, including ourselves. Dear metropolitan Benjamin! Your experience of the Church, your spiritual leadership and interreligious labours serve as an example to us that we can confront these challenges head on and preserve our faith by adding the universal Christian spirit to the existing picture of the world. I congratulate you on the feast day, dear brothers and sisters. May the Lord grant to all of us through the intercessions of the Most Holy Mother of God strength in faith and prosperity. Dear metropolitan Benjamin! May the Mother of God protect you beneath her omophorion and keep you in good health for many years to the glory of the holy Russian Church!"

Metropolitan Kirill greeted the guest and congratulated the faithful on the occasion of the feast day of the appearance in this holy place of the Kazan icon of the Mother of God.

The metropolitan emphasized in particular in his speech that "this is simply more than a church solemnity; it is a true feast day of the people loved by many. The Kazan icon of the Mother of God can today be found in the homes of all the faithful. This icon has drawn the ineffable love of our people towards it. And we are today, perhaps undeservedly, the keepers endowed with grace of this holy place. It is a great joy to see you all today and to pray in this magnificent cathedral which has been built on the site of the discovery of the miraculous icon. It was indeed here that the Queen of Heaven was pleased to allow her image to appear to the faithful. Through her miracles, love and intercession she has embraced many souls and brought them to our Maker and God, to her Divine Son our Lord Jesus Christ. I wish each and every one of you that your path always be illumined by the light of God's blessing and the protection of the prayers of the Most Pure Mother of God. Most Holy Mother of God, help all of us!"

The bishops, clergy and faithful then sung the hymn 'O Most Good Queen'.

The head of the metropolitanate of Tatarstan expressed his gratitude to the people through whose labours the Kazan Cathedral had been erected: "Standing upon this holy site today, I would like again and again to thank the leadership of our republic and the builder of our remarkable cathedral the head of Tatarstan Rustam Nurgalievich Minnikhanov, who has conveyed his greetings to all of us on the occasion of the feast day. We express our gratitude to state councilor Mintimer Sharipovich Shaimiev and his aides who restored this holy church, and to all the good people who took part in the restoration of the Kazan Cathedral. And make the Lord repose in his heavenly kingdom the soul of dear metropolitan Theophanes who expended such great effort and prayers so that this cathedral be restored."

There was then a ceremony for the distribution of Patriarchal and episcopal awards.

At the end of the Liturgy those who participated in the service headed for the grave of metropolitan Theophanes (Ashurkov) located beyond the east wall of the Kazan Cathedral and sung 'Eternal Memory' for him.

A traditional meal was organized on the territory of the Monastery of the Mother of God for the parishioners and pilgrims as well as a programme of culture events. Volunteers from the diocese of Kazan also held a charity collection for large families and various social projects.

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