



## On Thursday of Holy Week the Primate of the Russian Church celebrated the Divine Liturgy and Office for the Consecration of Myrrh at Christ the Saviour Cathedral.



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On 17<sup>th</sup> April on Great and Holy Thursday, the day of the Remembrance of the Last Supper, His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill celebrated the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the great and the Office for the Consecration of Myrrh at the Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Moscow, reports the press service of the Patriarch.

The service for the preparation of the myrrh was taken by the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Lesser Cathedral Church of the Don Stauropegic Monastery in Moscow on Monday of Holy Week. The myrrh is boiled for three days: on Holy Monday until the evening; for the entirety of Holy Tuesday and the morning of Holy Wednesday. Throughout all this time priests read in turn the Holy Gospel while the deacons stir the myrrh. In vessels the myrrh is transported to the Christ the Saviour Cathedral. After

the evening service of Holy Wednesday the vessels are placed in the north, south and if necessary east sides of the altar. On Holy Thursday at the Liturgy before the Great Entrance the alabaster (a special vessel for preserving the old myrrh) is taken from the altar to the table of oblations.

In the morning of Thursday of Holy Week His Holiness Patriarch Kirill arrived at the west entrance of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral. At the doors of the church His Holiness handed over the alabaster to the senior priest protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov, who then took it into the sanctuary and placed it on the altar to the left of the artophorion.

Upon arriving at the Christ the Saviour Cathedral the Primate of the Russian Church venerated the relics of Saint Philaret of Moscow.

At the Liturgy concelebrating with His Holiness were: the metropolitan of Voskresensk Gregory, chancellor of the Moscow Patriarch, first auxiliary bishop to the Patriarch of Moscow and All for the city of Moscow; the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate; the metropolitan of Kashira Theognost, chairman of the Synodal department for monasteries and the monastic life; the metropolitan of Zvenigorod Arsenius; the archbishop of Odintsovo and Krasnogorsk Thomas, director of the administrative secretariate of the Moscow Patriarchy; the archbishop of Podolsk and Lyubertsy Axius; the bishop of Vidno Tikhon; the bishop of Balashikha and Orekhov-Zuyevo Nicholas; the bishop of Pavlovo-Posad Siluan, deputy chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchy; the bishop of Yegorievsk Methodius, acting chairman of the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission, rector of the Saint Tikhon Humanitarian University; the bishop of Ramenskoye Alexius, personal secretary to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill; protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov, secretary to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia for the city of Moscow; archpriest Mikhail Ryazantsev, sacristan of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral; clergy of the city diocese of Moscow.

Attending the service in the cathedral were: human rights commissioner for the Russian Federation Tatiana Moskalkova; the first deputy of the Russian Railways public relations office, chairman of the council of the Foundation for the Preservation and Development of the Solovki Archipelago A. V. Guts; and the first deputy of Russian Railways V.V. Mikhailov.

The hymns for the service were sung by the Patriarchal Choir of Christ the Saviour Cathedral, conducted by choirmaster Ilya Tolkachev.

The TV channel TV Centre broadcast live the Patriarchal service with commentary by professor of the Moscow Theological Academy A. K. Svetozarsky. The service was also broadcast live by Soyuz and Spas and also on the official portal of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarchia.ru.

At the Augmented Litany special petitions were offered and His Holiness the Patriarch read the prayer for Holy Russia. At the Litany for the Departed His Holiness prayed for the repose of the soul of ever-memorable Patriarch Alexy I, who died on this day fifty-six years ago.

At the Great Entrance the senior priest protopresbyter Vladimir Divakov emerged with alabaster of old myrrh and two couples of priests with vessels with new myrrh. At the Holy Doors His Holiness the Patriarch received the alabaster and placed it on the altar. The vessels with the new myrrh were placed at the right and the left of the altar before other vessels that had previously been placed there.

After the Eucharistic canon the Primate celebrated the Office for the Consecration of Myrrh. Before doing so, His Holiness the Patriarch delivered a homily to those gathered at the service:

“It was pleasing to the Lord to create after his ascension into the heavens the Church, which is a community of those people who believe in him. But this was not merely an association of like-minded people, for the Church was called to continue the Lord’s work throughout the whole world. And the work of God, revealed to us through his Son, goes beyond the imparting to people of lofty moral values; it is something far greater than that. The Lord, who sacrificed himself for the salvation of the human race, desired that his power – that which we call grace – should abide forever with those who became his followers, his disciples, which is to say with the Church of God.

And the Lord sealed this gift through the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, as is well known from the Book of Acts. The apostles, in ordaining their successors, became known as ‘guardians’, which in Greek denotes ‘bishops’. They passed onto them this gift so that these men head the Christian communities. Thus, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which was received from the Lord and imparted to the apostles and through them to their successors the bishops, and through the bishops to the priests, is passed down in the Church to the present time, and the visible, physical bearer of this grace is the holy myrrh.

This substance is a complex mixture of various natural sweet-smelling ingredients that exude a remarkable fragrance. But its power is not contained within this; rather it is in the grace passed down by the Lord through the holy apostles and resting upon the episcopate and through them on the priesthood, and in turn is given to all the faithful through the holy myrrh.

We consecrate myrrh on Holy Thursday. Today is Holy Thursday. I ask that all of you pray for our Church, for our people, so that our faith may never be broken in those who are to receive grace from the holy apostles, so that our bishops and priests preserve in purity this apostolic faith, so that no human temptations will ever provoke schisms and divisions, so that the life of the people of God, which is to say of all of us, proceeds in unity, wisdom, in spiritual and bodily purity, and so that every one of us, even of

those who sin, has the chance through repentance, the reception of the Holy Gifts of Christ, and through baptism and chrismation acquire the gift of grace through which all are transgressions are healed. May the Lord preserve all of us, our Church, our people and help us to keep the commandments he has left us, so that these truths are passed down from generation to generation until the end of the ages. Amen.”

As the troparion to Pentecost was sung the Primate poured the old myrrh from the alabaster into each vessel with the newly-consecrated myrrh. Then His Holiness Patriarch Kirill according to tradition filled the alabaster with the newly-consecrated myrrh. This action symbolizes the uninterrupted succession of grace preserved in the Church from the apostles to our time. At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy the keeper of the holy myrrh hieromonk Mitrophan (Matytsyn), the steward of the Patriarchal and Synodal residence at Saint Daniel Monastery and other clergy brought the alabaster and vessels with the new myrrh to the church of the Synodal residence at Saint Daniel Monastery. The myrrh will be distributed to all of dioceses of the Moscow Patriarchate with the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch.

The homily before communion was delivered by the bishop of Istra Seraphim, chairman of the Synodal department for youth affairs.

At the conclusion of the Liturgy the Primate of the Russian Church also delivered a homily to the gathered faith.