



## **DECR Chairman: The Lord calls every person to salvation in a variety of ways**



On December 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021, on the 27<sup>th</sup> week after the Pentecost, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Moscow church in honor of the icon of the Mother of God "Joy to All who Sorrow" on Bolshaya Ordynka.

The Archpastor was joined by the clergy of the church.

During the Litany of Fervent Supplication, petitions were offered up for deliverance of the coronavirus infection.

After the Litany, Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up a prayer recited at the time of the spread of baneful pestilence.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Archpastor addressed the congregation with a sermon:

“In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

Today, during the divine service, we heard the parable of the Lord Jesus Christ from the Gospel of Luke about those who were invited to the feast. It speaks about people who were invited to the wedding feast, but refused under various pretexts: one said that he had bought land and needed to inspect it, another bought a number of oxen and needed to take care of them, the third got married and had no time. And then the master said to his servant: “Go quickly through the streets and lanes of the city and bring here the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind” (Luke 14:21).

Like any parable of the Lord Jesus Christ, this parable was uttered in a specific situation, in a specific historical context. The called people meant the people of Israel. Those who refused to come to the feast are the Jews who did not accept the Messiah, the Savior, sent to them. Those who were invited in the second place are future generations of people, including not only the representatives of the people of Israel, but gentiles who came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was in this context that the parable was perceived by Christians of the first generation.

But whenever the parables of the Lord Jesus Christ are spoken to us, Christians of the twenty-first century, we ask ourselves: “What do they have to do with us?” It turns out that the link is here is the most direct, for the Lord is the same always, now and forever. Just like the Lord called people then, likewise He calls them now. As then, among the called were those who refused to hear His call, likewise now there are such people in our time. As then there were those whom the Lord called, as it were, in the second place, so now there are such people whom God calls, and they take places at the Last Supper, perhaps originally intended for other people.

The mystery of God's relationship with people is inscrutable and inexhaustible. Each person in his life may find God, or may not find Him. Everyone can in his life realize the calling that he received from God, or he may not hear, not notice it in himself and not realize it.

The Lord calls everyone to salvation in a variety of ways. God leads everyone to salvation. But man is prone to evil, and therefore many people refuse to respond to the call of God. And there are those who respond, but, walking along a straight road, then turn into a detour, because they do not find the strength in themselves to humble themselves before the will of God, obey God, overcome their earthly passions and lusts and go along the straight path that He leads to the Kingdom of Heaven. People begin to wander along these roundabout roads, fall into unfamiliar places, fall into the hands of robbers, suffer various disasters, but instead of turning to God and asking Him for help, they think that circumstances are to blame for their troubles.

The Lord calls us to His supper every time that the Divine Liturgy is celebrated. When Sunday or a particular church feast comes, the Lord calls us to come to the church of God and partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. However, very many Christians find various excuses for not being in the church, and under various circumstances refuse to participate in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and during feasts. And there are those who come, stand there during the service, but do not partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. The Lord tells them: "Take, eat: this is My Body" (Matt. 26:26), and they answer Him: "Next time." The Lord calls: "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the [a]new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:27-28), but they refuse: "I am not prepared, let me come another time."

The Lord calls so quietly and insistently, as it is said in the book of the Apocalypse: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3:20). God does not break into our doors, He stands quietly and knocks, calling us to follow Him. He calls us to partake of His Body and Blood in order to unite with Him spiritually and bodily. And sometimes we find one pretext, then another, then a third, in order to either refuse or postpone it for the future.

Let's not put off our salvation until later, for we don't know how much time we have left. We do not know how much longer we will live on this earth and how many more opportunities will the Lord give us to visit the church of God and partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

One by one people tend to pass: both old and young, healthy and sick, obese and thin. They pass for various reasons, including the virus that has been raging among us for the second year. And, as they say, the Lord is above us all. Therefore, we will use the opportunities that the Lord gives us. If He invites us to His supper, we will not refuse it, but we will come, accept the Holy Mysteries of Christ with faith and believe that the Lord will protect us from all evil in this world and guide us on the path to salvation, leading to us to the eternal life. Amen.

I congratulate you all on today's feast!"

Metropolitan Hilarion then presented Certificates to graduates of the English-speaking courses on the foundations of the Orthodox faith. The courses were held on the basis of the Educational Center named after St. Felix of Burgundy (St. Felix of Dunwich).

DECR Communication Service