



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk celebrates Divine Liturgy at Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Vienna



On 11 February 2018, Sunday of the Last Judgment, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Cathedral of St. Nicholas in the capital of Austria. Concelebrating with the archpastor were Archbishop Antony of Vienna and Budapest, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Administration for Institutions Abroad; Archpriest Vladimir Tyshchuk, rector of the church; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; Protodeacon Viktor Shilovsky, secretary of the diocese of Vienna and Austria, and clergy of the diocese.

After the divine service Archbishop Antony greeted the DECR chairman on behalf of the clergy and parishioners.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk addressed all those present with a homily, saying in particular:

"It is a great joy for me today to visit again the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, where I served for six years. I am happy to see its clergy, which has increased in number over the past years, but increased by the

people whom I know well.

“The delegation which I lead has come to this city in order to follow up on what had been said at the meeting in Havana by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Pope Francis, that is, to discuss how we, Orthodox and Catholic Christians, can help together our persecuted brothers and sisters in the Middle East: in Syria, Iraq and other countries where they are being subjected to the most severe persecutions. Perhaps, it is not fortuitous that today the Gospel has called us to do good: we have to remember not only about those people who are near us, but also about those who geographically may be far from us, but who spiritually are our brothers and sisters. They are Christians, just like we are, but they are suffering the gravest afflictions and persecutions, and it is our duty to do all we can to help them.

“If we devote our attention to the people who need our assistance, if we give food to those who are hungry, if we give drink to those who are thirsty, if we give shelter to those who have no place to stay in, if we visit those who are in prison, as our Lord Jesus Christ commands us to do, then on the Day of Judgment we will hear the words from today’s Gospel reading, “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34). Let us ponder over these words. The kingdom has been prepared for each and all of us from the foundation of the world. What is only required from us is to desire this Kingdom, to want to lead the life commanded to us by our Lord Jesus Christ, to do good, as He willed us to do, and to gain the imperishable and inexhaustible riches which we will take with us to the life eternal.

“On the threshold of Lent, let us ask the Lord to enlighten our heart by His grace, to give us strength to go along the path that He opened for us and that He commanded us to follow – the path that leads to the Heavenly Kingdom prepared for us. Amen.”

The DECR chairman arrived in Austria with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill to take part in the celebrations marking the second anniversary of the meeting between Pope Francis and Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia which took place in Havana on February 12, 2016.

On February 10, Metropolitan Hilarion attended a concert of the Russian religious music at the Konzerthaus in Vienna. Performing compositions by the Russian composers were the Tchaikovsky Symphony Orchestra and the Moscow Synodal Choir.

A conference on the situation of Christians in the Middle East, which will mark the second anniversary of the Havana meeting, will be held on February 12.

