Metropolitan Hilarion: We should remember that the life of each human being is in the hands of God



On November 6, 2020, the Church celebrates the Icon of the Mother of God ‘Joy to All the Afflicted’. On this day, the Divine Liturgy in the church in Bolshaya Ordynka in Moscow, in which this miracle-working icon is kept, was celebrated by the head of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

The archpastor was assisted by the clergy of the church.

The Deacon’s Rite was led by Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman.

The hymns were sung by the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by A. Puzakov, Russia’s Honored Artist.

After the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, petitions were voiced in connection with the spread of the coronavirus infection.

Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up a prayer recited during a time of the spread of a pernicious epidemic.

The praise was also sung before the main shrine of the church - the miracle-working Icon of the Mother of God the ‘Joy to All the Afflicted’.

After the service, His Eminence Hilarion addressed himself to the congregation with an archpastoral homily:

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

I congratulate all of you, dear fathers, brothers and sisters, on the feast in honour of the miracle-working Icon of the Most Holy Mother of God ‘Joy to All the Afflicted’. This holy image has been kept in our holy church since the late 17th century, and the miracles produced by this icon have been attested to throughout all this time.

We are living at a hard time when the epidemic of a painful disease has hit the whole world including our Motherland and the capital city of Moscow. Some have already recovered from it; others are awaiting in fear when this virus will come to them, while still others have already passed away to the other world. Certainly, during such a time many lose their self-control, patience, hope. And in such a time we have a special need of God and the intercession of the Most Holy Mother of God.

We should remember that the life of each human is in the hands of God. And the Lord can take this life away with the help of a virus or without its help. But to each of us the Lord gives an opportunity to spend the earthly life so that we may be ready for life eternal; so that in the earthly life we could bring a fruit that He expects from us - thirty-fold, sixty-fold or hundred-fold, depending on our energy, opportunities, abilities and our determination to follow the path of His Divine commandments. And on our path we are always helped by the Most Holy Mother of God.

Some Christians of other confessions say that there is no need to pray to Virgin Mary but we should pray only to God, because, in communication between people and God, no mediators are needed. But we know from our church experience that mediators we turn to - the Most Holy Mother of God, saints we venerate - do not prevent us from communication with God. And when we wish from our hears to cry out to God, there are no obstacles or barriers, and there are no mediators whatsoever. The Lord hears our prayers when we turn directly to Him.

Yet in heaven, we have intercessors and patrons - a whole host of saints who pray and intercede for us. And for us, it is not some theoretical truth, which we have come to learn from theological literature, but it is what we feel by doing when we pray to a saint asking him for something and receive what we asked for, sometimes absolutely miraculously and supernaturally; or, when we pray to the Most Holy Mother of God and She comes to us in order to help. And nobody will make us doubt that the Mother of God hears us, helps us and that She comes to us with help when we ask for it and sometimes even without our entreaty.

The Most Holy Mother of God protects the whole world, our Motherland and the capital city covering us with Her honourable veil. And in the days when we need Her help especially strongly, we will resort to Her and ask Her to implore Her Son and our Lord to give us an opportunity to live on this earth as long as it is necessary for our salvation, to give us strength to be good Christians, to give us love that He commanded us to have among ourselves, to support each other in this difficult time, above all of course by prayer.

Let us pray not only for ourselves, not only for our relatives and loved ones but also for all who are lying now on the sickbed and for those who have already passed away to the other life. Let us pray that the Lord may vouchsafe His mercy to them, that the Most Holy Mother of God may not leave anybody without Her prayerful intercession.

When this pandemic began, many felt that the Most Holy Mother of God became ever closer to us. She came to us and said, I will be with you all days of your heavy trial and will help you to endure this heavy trial. I think, many of us have come to feel Her special closeness to us in these days.

Therefore, let us turn to the Most Holy Mother of God as the Joy to All the Afflicted and derive from Her joy and consolation. Let us ask Her to carry past us the cup of suffering and trials so that this descend on us may cease quicker, that people may again come quietly to churches of God to pray, to make confession and to take communion without fear of being infected. May the Mother of God always intercede before the throne of Her Heavenly King for us and our loved ones, for our city, Motherland and the whole world.

We have many intercessors in heaven. Recently our church has received as a gift from benefactors a part of the relics of St. Nikephoros the Leper, a saint who lived not so long ago and suffered through all his life from a very grave illness. In his own lifetime, St. Nikephoros was vouchsafed the gift of healing and after his death he continues healing those who come to venerate his relics. In these days when we need so much the heavenly intercession of saints, let us turn to him with prayer, venerate his honorable relics and ask him to help us stay in good health and patience, so that by his intercession St. Nikephoros may help us in our life journey.

I congratulate you all, dear fathers, brothers and sisters on this feast. I wish that the Lord may preserve us all and the Most Holy Mother of God may protect us from every evil by her honorable veil’.

DECR Communication Service

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