



Metropolitan Hilarion: Faith alone is not enough for salvation



On 30th August 2020, 12th Sunday after Pentecost, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of "The Joy of All Who Sorrow" Icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka Street, Moscow. Concelebrating with the archpastor were clerics of the church.

During the Litany of Fervent Supplication, prayerful petitions were read out in view of the threat of the spreading coronavirus infection. Then Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up the prayer which is read at a time of harmful pestilence.

After the divine service the archpastor addressed the worshippers with a homily:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

“‘With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible’ (Mt 19:26), the Lord Jesus Christ said when was asked about salvation, asked how a person can be saved. Preceding these words was a conversation between the Son of God and the man who asked Him which commandments one should keep in order to inherit salvation and life eternal. The Lord said, ‘Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother’ (Mt 19:18-19). That is, He enumerated the basic commandments of the Old Testament. Yet, the man asked again, ‘What lack I yet?’ (Mt 19:20). And when the Lord said, ‘If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me’ (Mt 19:21), the young man, who had great possessions, went away sorrowful, for he heard not what he wanted to. What Christ said to him was beyond his human powers.

“Even the disciples of the Lord, when they heard His words, were amazed and wondered, saying, ‘Who then can be saved?’ (Mt 19:25), if in order to be saved one has to give away all possessions and become poor.

“It was not their question that the Lord answered, but the question about salvation in general which we ask and which for many centuries theologians have been asking: how can a man be saved?

“From St Paul’s epistles we know that ‘a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ’ (Gal 2:16). The rules that the Lord recited during His conversation with the rich young man were precisely the works of the law, i.e. the Old Testament commandments. It means that in order to be saved, it is not enough to keep them.

“At the same time the Holy Apostle James reminds us that ‘faith without works is dead’ (Jas 2:20). It means that faith alone is not enough for salvation. Faith cannot save a person, if he/she will not fulfill God’s commandments.

“Salvation of each and all of us is in the hands of God, but the Lord expects a person, first of all, to keep His commandments. And if one wants to achieve spiritual perfection, then, besides the commandments set forth in the Old Testament, there is also what the Lord offers His disciples –those who wish to follow Him, denying everything. And such people always exist. Such are the apostles, and the martyrs, and the venerable, who did not treasure anything in life, be it family ties, position or life itself, so much that they could not sacrifice it for the sake of Christ.

“When reading the lives of saints, we are struck by the zeal and strength with which they performed their heroic deeds. We often ask ourselves: could we live the way they did? Are we ready to follow their path? And the Lord answers us that salvation is not in the hands of people. Salvation is in the hands of God and therefore we should, first and foremost, hope for the mercy of God and for His help. We should, first

of all, appeal to God, asking Him to teach us how to fulfill His commandments, to teach us how to live like Christians and to lead us to the Heavenly Kingdom. And what is required of us is to keep God's commandments unto the measure that is possible for us, to rely on God's will and mercy in everything that is beyond our powers and to hope that the Divine grace will supply what we lack.

“A new school year is about to start. And now we will celebrate a moleben before the beginning of the school year. We will be asking God to grant unto our children human wisdom and Divine wisdom, so that our children may never forget and love God, be diligent in their studies, but, above all, be diligent in their life in the Church.

“We will be praying that our children may always remain in the Church and never leave her, because the Church helps everyone, be it an adult or a child, go through life and keep the Divine commandments. Let us lift up our prayer to the Lord that He enlighten and strengthen our children, grant unto them abilities to gain learning about earthly sciences and about the principal Divine science – Christian faith.

“Let us pray together for our children. May the Lord bless them in their studies.”

Metropolitan Hilarion celebrated the moleben before the beginning of the school year and sprinkled all those present with the blessed water.

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