



Metropolitan Hilarion: Faith is not a result of miracle – miracle is a result of faith



On 5th July 2020, 4th 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 special prayers were offered in response to the danger of the spreading coronavirus infection. After the Litany Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up a prayer "read in time of the harmful pestilence."

After the Liturgy the archpastor delivered a homily:

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

“Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

“Today we have heard a story from the Gospel According to Matthew about the healing of a centurion’s servant by the Lord Jesus Christ. The centurion, a Roman soldier who probably was a pagan, did not belong to the people of Israel and did not confess the One God, came to Jesus Christ, beseeching Him to heal his servant, and the Lord responded to his entreaty and was willing to come to the centurion’s home and perform the healing.

“Filled with faith in Him, the centurion said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.’ And the soldier told the Saviour about his service, ‘For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel’ (Mt 8:8-10).

“Why did the Lord marvel at the centurion’s faith? Why was this episode recorded in the Holy Gospel? For, certainly, there were many situations when people showed their faith in the Lord. However, telling the life story of Jesus Christ, the evangelist recorded this very episode. He did it so that we may realize that there are no obstacles to the faith in Christ, that it saves man and his loved ones, and so that we may see: every person is to consider himself/herself unworthy of the presence of God and to hope at the same time for His presence.

“When preparing to partake the Holy Mysteries of Christ, we read in the Order of Preparation for Holy Communion: ‘I am not worthy... that Thou shouldst enter under the roof of my soul,’ and yet, we call the Lord for help, we come to the Lord ourselves, enter His home so that He may heal us of our spiritual infirmities and give succour in our life journey, and, what is the most important, to unite with Him spiritually and bodily in the Mystery of the Holy Communion. The Lord miraculously performs this Mystery of healing our soul, and what happens to us in the church of God affects our loved ones, because here we partake of the grace of God and then we convey it to those around us.

“The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to take upon Himself people’s sins and infirmities, to heal every illness and infirmity in people. But the Lord says that there is one essential condition for a person to be able to receive healing. This condition is faith. Faith is not a result of miracle – miracle is a result of faith. We can trace this rule in all the four Gospels, in many episodes, in which the Lord heals people.

“The story we have heard today tells us the same: if there is faith, all things are possible to a

believer. If a man believes in Christ, he is able to wait until God performs a miracle for him and those around him. Therefore, when it happens that we need God's help for ourselves and for our loved ones, we must always with faith and hope ask the Lord for healing and succour. We must realize that we are unworthy of the Lord coming under our roof, devoting His attention to us, healing our infirmities and those of our relatives and friends. However, at the same time with boldness we come to the Lord, because we know: all things are possible to a believer, as Christ Himself said: '...verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you' (Mt 17:20).

"We are living at a time of hardships, when the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread, infecting and killing people. By the mercy of God, it seems that the disease is becoming less intensive and the number of those who get infected and die of the COVID-19's after-effects is reducing. God willing, this process will continue. God willing, this disease will go away. Yet, while it is still here, we must, first of all, take care of each other.

"There are people among us who do not believe that the coronavirus exists and is dangerous. As a rule, these are the people not affected by the COVID-19 infection, whose relatives and friends have not suffered from the disease. They do not believe that the situation is serious, do not believe the mass media – they see in the epidemic pretty much a planned campaign against the Church and against God. A certain clergyman, who was preaching such ideas, was defrocked the other day for, in particular, undermining people's trust in the Church and her supreme authority, for questioning the Patriarch's words, talking nonsense and preaching heretical ideas.

"We ought to be very attentive to what is going on around us. Even if some of us do not believe that the virus is dangerous and are ready to risk their own life, let us not risk other people's life. So, we must continue to observe all the prescribed measures: to wear masks, keep the distance and follow other recommendations in order to minimize the risk of infection not only for ourselves, but also for those around us.

"At the same time, let us bear in mind that God reigns over everything. He sent upon us this ordeal in order to strengthen our faith, so that we may feel in need of His help and beseech His mercy, so that we may come to Him with a repentant prayer and a request for healing, as the centurion did, whose story we have heard today from the Gospel reading.

"The centurion heard the words of the Lord Jesus Christ that He had not found such faith even in Israel; other people also heard these words. We also remember the Lord saying that sitting down

with Abraham will be those who initially were not intended to: ‘...many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom (i.e. of the people of Israel) shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ (Mt 8:11-12). This is a stern warning not one to those children of Israel who lived in the days of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also to every member of the ‘New Israel’ – the Church of Christ – because the Lord called all of us to the Church, He made us citizens of this ‘New Israel.’ Salvation is not granted automatically to a person, without any efforts on his/her part. If we have no faith, no love for God and for one another, if we do not take care of each other and do not have sympathy for each other, then the place prepared for us in the Heavenly Kingdom will be occupied by someone else, and we will be cast out into outer darkness.

“When hearing these words and reading about Christ’s miracles in the Gospel, let us ask ourselves: how do we respond to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ, how do we come to Him – with faith, like the centurion, or with other feelings? Let us ask the Lord to give us such faith that is necessary in order to hear His word and respond to it and to go along the path leading to the Heavenly Kingdom to its very end. Amen.”

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