Metropolitan Hilarion: Without baptismal font one cannot become a member of the Church



On 19th January 2020, the feast of the Holy Theophany – the Baptism of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great and the Rite of Great Blessing of Water at the Church of "The Joy of All Who Sorrow" Icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka Street in Moscow.

Concelebrating with the archpastor were clerics of the church.

After the Litany of Fervent Supplication Metropolitan Hilarion said the prayer for peace in Ukraine.

Following the Great Blessing of Water, the archpastor delivered a homily, saying in particular:

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

“I cordially greet all of you, dear Fathers, brothers and sisters, with the feast which in the church calendar is called Theophany. It is not fortuitous, for on this feast we commemorate the event described in the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke – when the Lord Jesus Christ came to the Jordan River to receive baptism from John the Forerunner.

“When Jesus was coming up out of the water, people heard the voice of God the Father: ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’ (Mt 3:17). And the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

“It was the first time in history when the three Persons of the Holy Trinity revealed Themselves in Their undivided unity, for the Son of God was present among people, God the Father’s voice was heard, and the Holy Spirit was revealed as a dove. We are glorifying today this revelation of the Trinity as Theophany, for the Lord revealed Himself to us not just as One God, but as God One in three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“Why is it of such importance to us? Why does the belief in the Holy Trinity constitute the foundation of the Christian doctrine? Because God willed to send into the world His Only-Begotten Son Who, as St. Paul says, ‘being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God’ (Phil 2:6).

“The Only-Begotten Son of God, Who is God Incarnate, came into this world in order to grant unto us salvation. And the path towards this salvation is opened to us though immersion in water.

“The tenth article of the Creed speaks about the Sacrament of Baptism as the means of our salvation and deliverance from sin. “I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins,” we say. Each of us received this baptism. Without the baptismal font one cannot become a member of the Church and attain salvation granted by Jesus Christ. Through this font we enter the Church of Christ, and though it also we enter the Heavenly Kingdom.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ descended into the waters of the Jordan River after many people who had come to John the Baptist in order to be washed as a sign of repentance. Yet, the Son of God Who needed neither repentance nor baptism, descended into the Jordan waters in order to bless and fill them with His Divinity, in order to open to everyone who will go into these waters sanctified by His presence the path to the Heavenly Kingdom.

“On the feast of the Baptism of our Lord we perform, in accordance with church regulations, the Great Blessing of Water. We bless the water in commemoration of our Lord Jesus Christ’s descending into this water. We bless it, so that it may become a great shrine for us, used for the healing of our soul and

body. We drink this water, we use it for anointment, we sprinkle it on our children, our relatives. We use this water to bless our homes and things we hold dear. Through this water we are given the blessing of God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit, for all these three Persons of the Holy Trinity participate in the blessing of water: we pray to God the Father, the Holy Spirit descends on the water to sanctify it, and the Son of God is invisibly present among us. And the grace of the Triune God, through our common conciliar prayer, blesses the water which for us becomes a holy thing, leading us to the Heavenly Kingdom.

“Let us ask the Lord that He may help us to be true Christians, that the baptism which we received – someone in their infancy, others as children or adults – may bear its fruits in our life, that the grace of the Triune God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – may always abide with us and guide us on our path towards the Heavenly Kingdom. Amen.”

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