On the Day of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates Divine Liturgy in Bari



On December 18, 2018, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR) arrived in Bari, Italy.

On December 19, the commemoration day of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Metropolitan Hilarion presided over the Divine Liturgy in the upper church of the basilica in which the relics of this great man of God have lain for over 930 years. The metropolitan was assisted by Metropolitan Gregory of Nizhniy Novgorod and Arzamas, who led a large group of pilgrims, Archpriest Viacheslav Bachin, rector of the Bari representation of the Russian Orthodox Church, and over fifty clergy from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and other countries included in the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate.

After the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, a prayer was lifted up for peace in Ukraine.

In his homily, His Eminence Hilarion spoke about St. Nicholas as the saint venerated most of all in the Russian Church. ‘We look at him as an example for emulation. From our own experience, we know that St. Nicholas hears our prayers, responds to our needs and helps us when we travel, when we need help, when we are caught in life’s grave situations, when we pray for our loved ones… That is why every time when we celebrate the memory of the saint and wonderworker Nicholas, we wish to glorify his holy name not only in our own church but also to come here, to his relics, and bow before his sacred tomb and pray for ourselves and for all our loved ones’.

Metropolitan also spoke about the bringing of a part of St. Nicholas’s relic to Russia in May-June 2017. ‘Over two million people, including those who had no opportunity and means to come to Bari, could venerate the parts of his relics, which were specially taken from the tomb and brought to Moscow and our northern capital city of St. Petersburg. These people will cherish in their memory for ever the grace they received when St. Nicholas visited the country in which he is venerated as no other saint is’.

His Eminence also noted that the bringing of the shrine to Russia became possible as a result of the agreements reached by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Pope Francis of Rome during their meeting in Havana.

Metropolitan Hilarion also spoke about Ukraine. ‘Today we have lifted up a prayer for Ukraine as we have done it at each liturgy in the recent years. In these days, we pray especially for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the episcopate, priests and millions of the faithful who are subjected to persecution and defilement only because they wish to preserve the unity of the Church and do not wish to join a new structure being created at the order of the secular authorities’. His Eminence expressed hope that St. Nicholas will send his beneficial help to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as she is going through the hard times of discrimination and persecution for her faithfulness to the unity with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Expressing gratitude for the invariable hospitality and good will on behalf of Patriarch Kirill and numerous Orthodox pilgrims, Metropolitan Hilarion said, ‘May the intercession of St. Nicholas help us all. May his holy relics uniting Christian East and West remain for millions of Christians a source of healing and inspiration for the feat of Christian life and a consolation in sorrows’.

DECR Communication Service

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