Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated on 30th anniversary of his ministry



On June 21, 2017, the day of the 30th anniversary of his ministry, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR) and rector of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies (CMI), celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of the Icon of Our Lady 'The Joy to All the Afflicted' in Bolshaya Ordynka in Moscow.

With the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, his concelebrants were Metropolitan Niphon of Pilippopolis, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Metropolitan Kirill of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturye; Metropolitan George of Nizhniy Novgorod and Arzamas; Metropolitan Merkury of Rostov and Novocherkassk, head of the synodal department for religious education and catechism; Metropolitan Zinovy of Saransk and Mordovia; Archbishop Sergiy of Solnechnogorsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate administrative secretariat; Archbishop Roman of Yakutsk and Lensk; Bishop Panteleimon of Orekhovo-Zuevo, head of the synodal department for church charity and social service; and Bishop Ambrose of Neftekamsk and

Birsk.

Among Metropolitan Hilarion's concelebrants also were Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman; Archpriest Nikolay Krechetov, dean of the Moskvoretsy district in Moscow; Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), representative of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Bulgaria; Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Moscow Patriarchal see; Archpriest Alexander Shargunov, rector of the St. Nicholas church-in-Phyzhy; Archpriest Valentin Asmus, rector of the church of the Protecting Veil at Krasnoye Selo; Hegumen Feofan (Lukyanov), head of the DECR protocol section; Archpriest Alexander Abramov, dean of the Pokrovsky district in Moscow; Archpriest Andr4ey Milkin, rector of the church of the Protomartyr Dimitrius; Archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; Archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far abroad; Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; Hieromonk Ioann (Kopeikin), CMI pro-rector for training; as well as the clergy of the church and CMI students in holy orders.

The Deacon Ordo was led by Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, assistant to the DECR chairman.

Worshipping in the sanctuary were Metropolitan Porfirije of Zagreb-Ljubljana (Serbian Orthodox Church); Bishop Anthony of Moravici, representative of the Patriarch of Serbia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; and Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk.

Present at the service was the Presidential Envoy for the Central Federal Region A. Beglov.

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

After the liturgy, Metropolitan Niphon extended congratulations to Metropolitan Hilario on behalf of the representatives of Local Orthodox Churches to the Moscow Patriarchal see, who said in particular, 'Dear Vladyka, for 30 years you have served in holy orders, living in the light of the Gospel and transforming daily by grace. The Lord has endowed you with many talents. You emulate great luminaries. Speaking from various rostrums, you defend the Orthodox faith and rise in defense of Christians in the East'.

Bishop Anthony of Moravici read out a congratulatory message from the Primate of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Congratulating Metropolitan Hilarion on behalf of his concelebrant bishops, Metropolitan Kirill of Yekaterinburg and Verkhoturye said, 'For many years now you have been hosting the Church and the

World program on one of our central TV channels, and many people listen to you because nowadays they need so wise, calm and truthful a word as you offer. Therefore, on behalf of all those who have come today to celebrate your significant anniversary, I would like to congratulate and thank you for your steadfastness and courage, as without any sharp movements or making advances to this or that side, you say what the Russian believer must and wishes to hear today'.

Addressing Metropolitan Hilarion, Presidential Envoy for the Central Region A. Beglov said, 'Our dear and beloved Eminence, on behalf of the Presidential Administration I would like to congratulate you on the 30th anniversary of your ministry. You are a diplomat, author, composer and host of the universally loved program 'The Church and the World'. You are also rector of the Ss Cyril and Methodius Institute of Post-Graduate Studies, but the most important of your tasks and merits is that you are a friend, comrade and brother. For 30 years you have learnt and today teach many how to love the Church and defend the Motherland. We admire your diplomatic service and the way in which you defend our country and defend Orthodoxy in the whole world'.

Then followed a response from Metropolitan Hilarion:

'Your Eminences,

Dear Fellow-Archpastors,

Esteemed Alexander Dmitriyevich,

Dear Fathers, Dear Brothers and Sisters:

I am very glad that on the day marking the 30th anniversary of my ministry in holy orders, we have gathered together in this holy church, in which, with the blessing of His Holiness, I have carried my pastoral ministry to celebrate together the Divine Liturgy and to praise at God's altar the Giver of all good things our Lord and God Jesus Christ Who gives each of us everything that is necessary for our salvation.

Today we heard in the Reading of the Gospel the Saviour's words addressed to His apostles: "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16). It seems difficult to choose a more suitable quotation from Holy Scriptures for describing the ministry of a chairman of the department for external church relations who has to be guided almost daily by this commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I feel happy to have stood in holy orders at God's altar for thirty years out of the fifty years of my

life. It is a great privilege, great honour, great joy and, certainly, great responsibility because the Lord holds priests more accountable than ordinary people – He will call them to account for their every word and every task. Priesthood is beyond human resources but it is not accidental that the Lord said to His disciples, “Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit”. And we as ministers feel the help of the Holy Spirit in our ministry from day to day.

It happened so that I took my monastic vows 30 years ago as well, at the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius. With the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch in connection with this anniversary I visited the monastery with which I continue to feel a living bond. It may not be accidental that my ordination took place 30 years ago in the same monastery, because I feel the help of the Holy Spirit in my ministry at all my paths.

I would like on this day to thank my mother who is present here. She has given birth to me not only for a life on earth but also for the eternal life through the holy Orthodox faith, which she taught me when I was still a child.

I would like to tender thanks “to the mentors who safeguarded our youth”. They are Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk and Yuriev of eternal memory and Archbishop Viktorin of eternal memory, who ordained me on this day 30 years ago. It is also the late abbot of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit Archimandrite Nikita, who made me a monk, and the pastors and archpastors who in my youth were for me a living example of the service of the Lord and who have already passed away to the other world.

I am especially glad today to see among my concelebrants Father Alexander Shargunov, who was my first spiritual mentor and, throughout my youth, instructed me with his pastoral word, sometimes gentle and sometimes strict and to a great extend formed me as a priest.

I am very glad to see today Archpriest Valentin Asmus, who, in my youth, enkindled the love of learning in me, and supplied me with a great amount of scientific books. It was a great help for me in my spiritual formation.

I thank fellow-archpastors who have gathered here to mark this day together with me. We all are to carry out the tasks the Lord has entrusted us with through the Supreme Authority of our Church. We can see that the longer we serve the greater our responsibility becomes. Therefore, with each day we feel ever stronger the need of the grace-giving help of God and of strengthening from the Holy Spirit so that we may carry out important church tasks.

On this day I would like to express special gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, with whom I have been working for 22 years now on almost daily basis. “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (Jn. 15:16), the Lord said to His disciples. Thus, in his time, Metropolitan Kirill, the Patriarch to be, chose me first for work at the Department for External Church Relations and later for episcopal ministry. And when he became the Patriarch he handed down to me the important service of the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, which I have carried out for twenty years. Now this service is entrusted to me, but every day I recall how it used to be carried out by the present Patriarch Kirill and try to emulate him and learn from him. And being near him is a school that nothing can replace or be compared with.

His Holiness the Patriarch has entrusted to me many other tasks as well, particularly, the guidance of the theological work in our Church through chairmanship at the Synodal Biblical-Theological Commission and inter-department working group for theology and through the rector’s work in the Church’s post-graduate school. It is a work that brings both joy and satisfaction but also demands a responsible attitude because theologians are people who form the doctrinal language of the Church. For this reason it is so important that in their theological search they should rely on the Gospel, the works of holy fathers of the Church and the whole age-old tradition of Orthodoxy.

On this day, the words of gratitude are united with a prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour and God that He may preserve our Holy Church and help us to continue bearing witness to His truth, to His Gospel before this world. This world often turns hostile to us in spite of the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church enjoys today due honour and respect and is reviving at a pace no Christian Church has ever revived and developed.

We live at a blessed time. Many of those who are standing here remember the times when the Church lived in constrained circumstances, when we had no opportunity to appear on television, to host programs or to publish books and all the religious literature could be obtained, as they said, under the counter, at a black market, and could be duplicated in a small number of copies and distributed in samizdat. However, already at that time the Lord made us confident that someday the Church would be free and we would become witnesses and participants of the miracle of God which happens today to our Church.

I hope very much that this miracle will continue on the same scale and at the same pace. I hope that Orthodox faith will consolidate our Motherland and our people and that we as servants elected by the Lord and installed to His divine sowing will prove to be worthy of the responsibility that He has placed on us.

I wholeheartedly thank you, dear fellow-archpastors, dear fathers, esteemed Alexander Dimitrievich, dear brothers and sisters. I wish us all God’s help and salvation in Christ. I wish that the Lord may bring every one of us to the Heavenly Kingdom. Amen’.

DECR Communication Service

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