



## **Metropolitan Hilarion conducts funeral service for Leut.-Gen. V. Khalilov, artistic director of Alexandrov Ensemble**

On January 14, 2017, Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, conducted the funeral service for Leut.-Gen. Valery Khalilov, artistic director of the Russian Army's Alexandrov Academic Ensemble of Song and Dance, who died in the air crash over the Black Sea. The TU-154 plane of the Ministry of Defense carried 92 people including the Alexandrov Ensemble members.

Before the funeral service began, Metropolitan Hilarion, speaking on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and on his own behalf, expressed heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased and all those who assembled at the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Epiphany-at-Elokhovo to pay their last respects.

In his address, Metropolitan Hilarion said about the deceased: 'He lived a short life by human measure but it was a beautiful life. The death of Valery Khalilov was tragic, and we still cannot recover from the news about what happened over the Black Sea, an air crash which was sudden for us all and which, as it is in such cases, took us unawares. But there is nothing accidental for God – it is He Who determines both one's time of birth and death. God measures off the life span for each. He determines how, when and where one is to come into this world and leave it'.

He also said, 'We are standing at the deceased's coffin but we are not inconsolable because we know that beyond the threshold of death there is eternal life that awaits a human being. He knew and believed that the Lord would meet him beyond the threshold of death.

'This man dedicated his whole life to the service of the Motherland. He was a hereditary army conductor; one can say it was in his blood. He received it from his father and handed down to his brother, so the army conductors dynasty continues. For a long time, Valery Khalilov was Russia's chief army conductor. He worthily carried out the service entrusted him by the Motherland. For many years he led the Moscow military station's orchestra during parades in Red Square.

'I happened to be friends with him since the time when nine years ago we went together to America to present my *Christmas Oratorio*. It happened so that he was the first performer of that composition.

Together we toured several cities in America and he is still remembered and loved there. When the news came about his tragic death, not only here in Russia but also in America and other countries people remembered him and all those who died together with him in the plane crash.

'I will tell you again: a human being is created for eternal life. This life continues here, too, on earth, because the memory of a person does not disappear with his departure but stays in the hearts of his loved ones and all those who knew and loved him. The memory of Valery Khalilov will stay in the military musical college which he graduated and which will bear his name. But for a human being himself who leaves this world, eternal life continues in the other world. And parting with Valery Mikhailovich here, on the earth, we do no part with him because we understand: each of us will move to the other world in his time, where we will meet him and those who also died in that terrible catastrophe and all our loved ones.

'Let us pray for the repose of the soul of the departed God's servant Valery. Let us ask that the Lord may forgive all his sins, voluntary and involuntary, because, as the prayers of this funeral service say, there is no one who lived without sinning. Let us pray to God so that He may give repose to the soul of the deceased Valery in the dwellings of the righteous, *where there is no sickness, neither sorrow, nor crying, but everlasting life*'.

Present in the church were representatives of the state authorities, staff member of the Ministry of Defense and Valery Khalilov's relatives.

In memory of Valery Khalilov, Metropolitan Hilarion's *Christmas Oratorio* was performed in the evening of that day at the Crocus City Hall in Moscow by the Tchaikovsky Grand Symphony Orchestra conducted by the USSR People's Artist V. Fedoseyev, children's and adults' choirs and celebrated opera soloists.

Addressing the listeners before the recital, Metropolitan Hilarion said, 'The music to resound today in the largest concert hall in Russia, is devoted to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ Who became man to the world. In our life, things joyful alternate with things sorrowful. It happened so that today I conducted the funeral service for Leut.-Gen. Valery Khalilov, who was Russia's chief military conductor for many years and in 2007 conducted the *Christmas Oratorio* premiere. It took place at the Basilica of the National Shrine in Washington, where five thousand people assembled, as many as today here, and the American public hailed Valery Khalilov and the Ministry of Defense Central Orchestra. Since that time we were friends with this remarkable man and when the news came about his tragic death we decided to devote today's concert to the memory of Valery Khalilov and all those who died together with him in the air crash over the Black Sea'.

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