Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates at Moscow representation of Orthodox Church of Czech Lands and Slovakia



On December 19, 2016, the commemoration day of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations (DECR), celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the St. Nicholas Church-in-Kotelniki – the Moscow representation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, which marked on that day its 17th anniversary.

Metropolitan Hilarion was assisted by Metropolitan Niphon of Pilippople, representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Archbishop Michael of Prague and the Czech Lands, Bishop Polikarp of Belogradchik (Bulgarian Orthodox Church), Archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky), representative of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and the clergy of the church.

Present at the service were Mr. V. Remek, the Czech Republic's Ambassador to Russia, Mr. I. Derzo, councilor of the Slovak Republic embassy, and Mr. V. Alekseyev, president of the Foundation of the Unity of Orthodox Nations.

Following the liturgy, a praise was sung at the miracle-working icon of St. Nicholas.

Then Archimandrite Seraphim addressed Metropolitan Hilarion expressing gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia for having blessed His Eminence's celebration at the St. Nicholas church on the day of its patronal feast and 17th anniversary as representation to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Archbishop Michael read out a congratulatory message from His Beatitude Rostislav, Metropolitan of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, recalling the history of the establishment of the representation of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia by Patriarch Alexy and Metropolitan Dorotej in the Grand Consecration of the St. Nicholas Church-in-Kotelniki in November 1999. Metropolitan Dorotej gave to the St. Nicholas Church a part of the relics of St. Ludmila (a part of the relics of Vyacheslav too was brought to the church later), thus strengthening the spiritual ties between not only the Russian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of the Czech Land and Slovakia but also the fraternal Slavic nations.

Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated the congregation on the patronal feast on behalf of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and delivered an archpastoral homily:

'Today we are celebrating the memory of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker and Archbishop of Myra in Lycia, whose miracle-working icon is here, in this holy church. It can be said without exaggeration that St. Nicholas is the most venerated saint not only in the Russian Orthodox Church but perhaps throughout the world Orthodoxy and even the entire Christendom. A few days ago I happened to be at the relics of St. Nicholas in the Italian city of Bari, in which they have lied in rest since in 11th century, and I could see at firsthand how ardently this saint is honoured in all the world. It is not accidental that in liturgical texts on the feast of the translation of St. Nicholas's relics from Myra in Lycia to the city of Bari it is stated that he unites East and West. His intercession has united people as through centuries they in their troubles have always received speedy help through the saint's heavenly intercession.

'We know that St. Nicholas is a speedy helper as his help is not long in coming. Once we turn to him with prayer, we see that it is heard and before long we receive from the wonderworker what we asked for. May be, it is this special secret of the saint's daring before God's throne that has gained him universal glory in East and West'.

Metropolitan Hilarion also spoke about the great number of churches dedicated to St. Nicholas in the Russian Orthodox Church: ‘It would be interesting to figure out the number of churches and side altars dedicated to St. Nicholas in Moscow and in the whole Russian Orthodox Church. I think we will count more than one thousand. All this points to the fact that St. Nicholas the Wonderworker is really a special saint to whom we turn every day, for we can feel his help and his heavenly intercession.

‘We honour St. Nicholas as *a rule of faith and image of humility*. We learn from him Christian humility and at the same time daring that enabled him to defend so zealously the Orthodox faith against the false teaching of the Arians. We should also emulate the saint in steadfast commitment to the Orthodox faith and its defense as much as we can. At the same time however, we should be an image of meekness, an image of humility, emulating the saint in every virtue that we know of from his *Life*’.

Metropolitan Hilarion also greeted Metropolitan Niphon on the occasion of his recent anniversary and the high decoration awarded him by Patriarch Kirill in recognition of exceptional services he rendered for the ,long years of his life in Moscow as representative of the Orthodox Church of Antioch.

His Eminence also addressed himself to Archbishop Michael of Prague and the Czech Lands, wishing him God’s help in his important service as representative of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia in Moscow.

Greeting Bishop Polykarp, Metropolitan Hilarion asked him to convey best wishes of good health and peace to Patriarch Neophytos of Bulgaria.

With the blessing of Patriarch Kirill, Metropolitan Hilarion presented Mr. M. Yu. Abramov, founder of the Museum of Russian Icon in Moscow and president of the Bonorg company, with the Russian Orthodox Church’s jubilee medal issued in memory of the 1000th anniversary of the demise of the Holy Prince Vladimir.

DECR Communication Service

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