



Metropolitan Hilarion: Descending into the Jordan, the Lord sanctified its waters by His Divinity



On 19 January 2016, the Feast of the Holy Theophany – Baptism of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy and the rite of the Great Blessing of Waters at the Moscow Church of the “Joy to All the Afflicted” Icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka Street.

Concelebrating with the archpastor were Hieromonk Ioann (Kopeykin), pro-rector of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies, and clerics of the church.

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

The Liturgy was followed by a homily. Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers, saying in particular,

“On the feast day of the Holy Theophany we recall an event described in today’s reading from the Gospel According to St Matthew. However, Evangelists Mark and Luke narrate as well how at the very outset of His service, the Lord Jesus Christ came to the river Jordan to be baptized of John, prophet and Baptist.

“John’s baptism was that of repentance. Its spiritual meaning was cleansing from sin.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ was like us in all things but sin, and did not need cleansing; yet, he came to the Jordan *to fulfill all righteousness* (Mt 3:14), as He said to John who tried to forbid Him (cf. Mt 3:14). What do the Lord’s words, *thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness*, mean? It means to do God’s will. The Son of God came unto this world in order to do the will of God the Father. And He had to begin His service with receiving baptism, along with other people, by immersing Himself in the waters of the Jordan. Yet, the Lord descended into the waters of the Jordan not in order to be purified, unlike other people who had come to John the Baptist, but in order to fill these waters with His Divine presence and His Divine might. Descending into the Jordan, the Lord sanctified its waters by His Divinity.

“The Baptism of the Saviour in the Jordan prefigured the baptism that we all, either as infants or as adults, embrace in order to enter the Church. Some of us might not remember his or her baptism, but there is no such human being who would have become a member of the Church without going through the purifying waters of the baptismal font. The Lord revealed to us the path leading to the Heavenly Kingdom, in order to *fulfill all righteousness*. This path begins with baptism. He fulfilled this righteousness in His life and now wants us, living in this world, to fulfill it, too.

“In order to do God’s will, people often have to go against other people’s will or, as the saying is, to go against the stream. Sometimes people have to go against their own human will, for it often leads us not to the good, but to evil and sin. In order to do God’s will, we sometimes have to restrain ourselves. However, the Lord never forsakes us in this struggle. He immersed Himself in the waters of the Jordan to fill them with His presence; and now He abides in our midst, helping us in our life journey.”

The rite of the Great Blessing of Waters was celebrated after the Liturgy.

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