DECR staff members share with their chairman joy over the Feast of the Nativity of Christ



On 10 January 2016, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Heavenly Queen in Bolshaya Ordynka Street, Moscow.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were archpriest Nikolai Balashov and Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairmen; archpriest Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for inter-Orthodox relations; archpriest Christopher Hill, a cleric of the Moscow Metochion of the Orthodox Church in America, rector of the Chapel of the Holy Trinity at the First Moscow Hospice; Rev. Arseniy Chernikin, head of the DECR Translation Service; Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; Rev. Dimitry Safonov, head of the DECR Sector for Interreligious Contacts; Rev. Ilya Kosykh, head of the DECR Communication Service; Rev. Mikhail Asmus, a DECR consultant; Rev. Alexy Dikarev, a staff member of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Christian Relations; ordained faculty members and students of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies; and clerics of the church.

Among those who attended the service was Duke Christoph of Oldenburg, President of the Board of Trustees of the Russian-German Young Leaders Conference.

The Litany of Fervent Supplication was followed by a prayer for peace in Ukraine, said by Metropolitan Hilarion.

The archpastor presented Rev. Alexy Dikarev with liturgical awards. Fr. Alexy was honored with the right to wear a pectoral cross and a kamelaukion in consideration of his work for the benefit of the Church.

After the dismissal, Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov) greeted Metropolitan Hilarion on behalf of the DECR staff members, saying in particular:

“Today we have gathered together in this old Moscow church in order to once again praise God’s ineffable goodwill towards men – the Nativity of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

“These days the Church calls upon us to glorify Our Lord and Saviour and to come out to meet Him. To find the right path, we need wisdom of the Magi and simple faith of the shepherds, examples of which we find in the Holy Scripture. Profound wisdom and sincere faith are necessary not only for seeing and accepting the Lord with a pure heart, but also for serving Him day after day. That is why it is so important that today, on Sunday following the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, you have gathered us here, around God’s Altar, so that we could pray and once again ask God to bless our work.”

On behalf of all those present, Archimandrite Philaret wished Metropolitan Hilarion help from the Incarnate Saviour in his numerous ministries.

Addressing the parishioners and the DECR staff members with his archpastoral homily, Metropolitan Hilarion said in particular:

“The Feast of the Nativity of Christ, which we have been celebrating all these days, fills our hearts with joy over the Infant God Incarnate and with a feeling that God is close to us and that the angels who praised His birth, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men* (Lk 2:14), are near.

“On these Christmas days we feel that peace comes to us from on high and fills our hearts, giving us strength to live in this world, where, to our regret, there is not only goodwill among men, but also human malice, conflicts and intrigues, so that we, responding to Christ’s call, were, among the evil and unlawfulness reigning in the world, *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world* (Mt 5:13-14).

“It is difficult to carry out such service and such mission. It is difficult to bear a cross that the Lord has laid upon us. Human strength would not suffice, but the Divine grace helps us to be Christians in this world, to proclaim the word of Christ to our neighbours, to keep the commandments of Our Lord and Saviour, and to bear the cross laid upon us by the Holy Church.”

Metropolitan Hilarion reminded all those present that the year 2016 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Department for External Church Relations. He said, in particular:

“This oldest Synodal Department of the Russian Orthodox Church was set up soon after the end of the Great Patriotic War, so that our Church could establish contacts with her children in far abroad countries and with Christians of other confessions and so that at a difficult post-war time the Russian Orthodox Church could be no longer in isolation and enter into the dialogue with all those who sympathized us and with whom we had something to share. Much has changed in the world since then, but the Department for External Church Relations continues to perform this important ministry, defending last frontiers of our Church and entering into dialogue with all our well-wishers, and not only with them. This dialogue is necessary, first of all, for protecting our Church, allowing her to carry out her salutary ministry.

“We always feel that the Primate of our Church, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, pays close attention to our work. His Holiness headed the Department for almost twenty years and is perfectly aware, better than anyone else, of the circumstances in which we carry out our service. He personally directs us and suggests in which way we should advance. We, DECR staff members, regard ourselves as assistants to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, since we do his will for the benefit of our Holy Church.”

Metropolitan Hilarion wished the DECR staff members God’s help in the new year, and once again greeted all the worshippers with the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

After the Liturgy the archpastor presented Mr. Dmitry Petrovsky, a staffer of the DECR Secretariat for Inter-Orthodox Relations, with a Patriarchal award – a Medal “In Commemoration of the Millennium of the Demise of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles.”

DECR Communication Service

Photo by Alexander Igonin and DECR Communication Service

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