



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Department for External Church Relations

## **On the feast day of the Nativity of Christ Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates Liturgy at the Church of “Joy to All the Afflicted” Icon of the Mother of God in Moscow**

On the night of 7 January 2016, the Feast of the Nativity of Christ, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the “Joy to All the Afflicted” Icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka Street, Moscow.

The Grand Compline and Matins were celebrated in the evening of January 6.

Concelebrating with the archpastor were Hieromonk Ioann (Kopeykin), pro-rector of Ss Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Postgraduate Studies; Hieromonk Sinesiy (Viktoratos), a student of the Institute of Postgraduate Studies from the Greek Orthodox Church; and local clerics.

Liturgical hymns were sung by the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by Mr. Alexei Puzakov, Honoured Artist of Russia.

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

The Christmas Message of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Archpastors, Pastors and All the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church was read out by a cleric of the Church of the “Joy to All the Afflicted” Icon of the Mother of God, Hegumen Filaret (Tambovsky).

In his Christmas message, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill addressed the people of Ukraine. The message reads, in particular:

“The fratricidal conflict which has arisen in the land of Ukraine should never divide the Church’s children by sowing enmity within peoples’ hearts. The true Christian cannot hate his neighbours or those afar. “Ye have heard, – the Lord says to those who hear him, – that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies... That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good” (Mt 5:43-45). May these words of the Saviour become a guiding force in our lives and may evil and hatred towards others never find a place in our hearts.”

In his homily delivered after the Liturgy Metropolitan Hilarion said, addressing all those present:

“Dear Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters, I cordially greet all of you with the Feast of the Nativity of Christ.

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men (Lk 2:14)* – this hymn was sung by the angels when they received the glad tidings about the Infant Christ been born in Bethlehem. Every time we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Christ we hear this sacred hymn, first sung by the angels. It reminds us that all people want peace, and today we have prayed for peace on earth and goodwill among men.

“Had people obeyed Our Lord Jesus Christ, it all would have come true. The Lord came into this world to bring peace from on high, not the peace that might be achieved through human efforts, but the one that is a gift of God.

“It was with this peace that the Lord filled the hearts of the shepherds and the Magi who had come from the far lands. And every time we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity of Christ our hearts are filled with peace, joy, and with a sense of God’s presence among us and within us, and with the feeling that a prophet of old expressed in the following words, *Know, ye Gentiles, and be conquered: for God is with us* (Is 8:9).

“It is because God is with us that we have no fear. It is because God is with us that we look to the future

with calm. And it is because God is with us that peace reigns in our hearts. Where there is no God there is no peace either, but where God is present there is peace, descending from on high.

“Let us thank God for He became man, came unto us, lived our earthly life, suffered and died on the Cross to redeem us from sin and to free us from the devil’s power; let us thank God for His Resurrection which opened to us a door to resurrection and life eternal.

“Let us ask God to grant peace to our homeland, to Ukraine, and to the whole world and to send from on high His peace unto our hearts. Amen.”

*DECR Communication Service*

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