



## Metropolitan Hilarion speaks at closing session of 23d Christmas Readings



January 23, 2015 – the closing session of the 23d International Christmas Readings under the theme ‘Prince Vladimir. Russia’s Civilizational Choice’ was held at the Church Councils Hall of the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.

The closing ceremony was attended by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, Metropolitan Clement of Kaluga and Borovsk, head of the ROC Publishing Council, Metropolitan Merkury of Rostov and Novocherkassk, head of the department for religious education and catechism, and other hierarchs, clergy, governmental officials, scholars, cultural figures and educators.

At the closing session, Metropolitan Hilarion delivered a paper on ‘The Holy Prince Vladimir – the Sun of Russia History’. He spoke of St. Vladimir as founder of the millennium-old cathedral of the Orthodox

faith, Russian State and Russian culture. Speaking about his many-faceted achievements as a statesman and Christian, Metropolitan Hilarion said, 'In the first place, the Baptizer of Russia assumed the whole burden of apostolic service of the newly-baptized lands. At the same time, he had the courage to act in accordance with his own vision free from any outside influence as to the special features and urgent needs of his state, his people and his Church'.

During the ceremony, the winners of the 10<sup>th</sup> International Children's Creativity Contest "The Beauty of God's World" were awarded.

Awards were also presented to the winners of the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual National Contest 'For the Teacher's Moral Feat'.

Seventeen clergy and faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church were awarded the Patriarchal decoration 'For the Work for Religious and Moral Education'.

Metropolitan Clement read out the Final Document of the 23d Christmas Readings.

The ceremony concluded with a literary-artistic composition 'Here Are the Tales of the Bygone Years about How Rus' Was Baptized'.

The 23d International Educational Christmas Readings united over ten thousand archpastors, governmental officials, clergy, monastics, teachers, cultural figures, scholars and representatives of various public groups.

*DECR Communication Service*