



Metropolitan Hilarion meets with representatives of the business community

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On June 14, 2012, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk met with representatives of the business community at the parish house of the Church of Our Lady the Joy of All the Afflicted in Moscow.

The meeting was attended by Bob Foresman, president of Barclays Capital Russia, Aleksey Kondrashov of Ernst&Young Russia, Sergey Ivanov,, Dymov Company director general, Sergey Brovkin, LLC Holdsway director general, Yuri Baidukov, Alexander Gubarev, head of the Galahad Advisers Moscow representation, Bob Wallingford, partner for KPMG, Yevgeny Kaliuzhny, partner for Deloitte, Vyacheslav Amelin, director of Zavidovo diplomatic resort, Victor Stihl, partner for the Capital City company, Mikhail Rozin of the All-Russia Bank for Regional Development, Constantine Lysakov, founder of the Krysha association of Christian businessmen, Robert Stabblebine, Yandex vice-president for development, Bruce Bauer, Verno Capital managing director, Andrey Rudenko, Veles Capital deputy director general, Darrell Stanford, CB Richard Ellis managing director, tom Brown, partner for Deloitte, Ivan Rozinsky of Banca Intesa, Nil Duncan, Caddo Exploration president, John Bernbaum, founder and present of Russian-American Christian Institute, Alexander Smirnov, director of the Russian-American Christian Institute, Ivan Khlebnikov, deputy director general of Alfa Bank.

Addressing the participants, Metropolitan Hilarion said:

‘Dear friends, I am glad to welcome you to the parish house of the Church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted. I would like to say a few words about the mission of the Church in today’s world. You are well aware of the Gospel’s history; you know how our Lord Jesus Christ created the Church and how difficult was the situation in which she developed. The situation in which the Church lives has never been easy; she has always been faced with opposition from this or that force. First of all, it is the force of the devil and his servants, but these are also the forces coming from people who have a negative and critical attitude to the Church, Christianity and religion on the whole, from those upset with the witness of the Church.

‘We should always remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ created the Church, He said her fate would not be easy and that His disciples would meet with resistance. Indeed, the Church was created as a divine-human community of people, as a community ‘not of this world’, and for this reason the powers of this fallen world aim to restrict as much as possible the Church’s presence in this world.

There are various ways of opposing the Church and her cause. These may be direct persecutions, which happened in the past and continue to this day. In our country this persecution went on for seventy years as the clergy were subjected to persecution and physical elimination and the Church's work was strictly controlled by the state. However, opposition to the Church has happened in more safe times including our own. The Church and her mission have proved inconvenient for many people, especially those who are involved in the sphere of consumption, in which actually the whole society is involved today.

Today many maintain that the Church certainly has the right to exist but religion is a private affair and each can believe as he or she wishes. So long as our faith is limited to church attendance once a week or once a month or once a year, so long as our religiosity is manifested only in the family without being applied to our professional activity, nobody is worried much. But if we begin to state our beliefs in public and especially to act in accordance with our beliefs, some begin to worry. And then the powerful system of counteraction is put into motion.

'Many of you have encountered corruption personally – the corruption that erodes our society including the business community from bottom up. And if you as a Christian decide to keep away from corruption schemes, you will encounter fierce resistance. If you say you do not participate in these schemes because you are a believer, you will be ridiculed at best and subjected to more severe measures at worst.

Today the Church is not persecuted in our country; the authorities do not control the internal life of the Church. In this sense, we are completely free. But the pro-active civic position of the Church raises displeasure and resistance. Whenever the Church begins to raise problems linked with people's everyday life, many people ask: Why should the Church interfere in it? Why can't the Church sit quietly, minding her own affairs, that is, baptizing, marrying, performing funeral service, blessing Easter cakes? Why should she dictate how we should behave and how we should create a family? For instance, the Church speaks much about the population problem. We state that the demographic crisis in our country has religious roots as people do not create large families because their system of priorities has been broken. Their priorities are success, material wellbeing, career, while family occupied the fifth or the tenth place. Even the advertising of a happy family always implies a family with one or maximum two children. Naturally, with this attitude the witness of the Church that childbearing is a blessing of God, that one should have as many children as the Lord sends him, not as many as he plans for himself, is seen as something obsolete and contrary to the norms by which this world lives.

'The Lord created the Church not for rituals, not for her to exist in a ghetto, not to turn her into a funeral services office. Living in this world, Christians should be the light for the world and the salt of the earth. It

is impossible to be the light of the world if we hide our lamp under a basket (see Mt. 5:13-15). But we do exactly that when we try to hide our Christian identity behind the walls of our homes and our parishes. Our lamp will give light to all those around us only if we bear witness to Christ by all our life and everyday work, doing it also before those who may have a negative and hostile attitude to this witness.

‘Some think that the Church is only the clergy; many parishioners believe their role should be reduced to passive participation in the liturgy. However, Christ calls all the members of His Church to be apostles and missionaries, to use the opportunities each of them has to preach the Word of God. Each of us has the missionary duty, and in our everyday life we are called to be guided by the Gospel. We should read the Gospel in order to verify our life with that which Jesus Christ has taught us, in order to learn how to live, how to act in particular situations. The Gospel’s teaching and commandments should be for us moral guidelines in our everyday life and in our secular actions’.

The participants in the meeting also discussed the participation of businessmen in missionary projects of the Russian Orthodox Church, support for extended families and aid to low-income groups of the population.

DECR Communication Service

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