



Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates at Sts Cosmas and Damian's-at-Shubino in Moscow

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On April 7, 2012, the Day of the Annunciation, which this year has coincided with Lazarus Saturday, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relation, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of Sts Cosmas and Damian the Unmercenary and Wonder-Workers at Shubino in Moscow. It was also the day when the church celebrated the patronal feast of its central altar.

After the liturgy, Archpriest Alexander Borisov, rector of the church, warmly thanked His Eminence for the joy of common prayer on the day of the church's patron saint.

Addressing His Eminence, Father Alexander said, 'I admire the abundance of natural gifts given to you by the Lord. Many years ago I read with interest your reflections on the state of our theological schools and fully shared them on the basis of the small experience I had when I studied at the seminary at that time. I fully share your public stand and assessment of Russia's past in the 20th century when atheism prevailed in the country. I admire the courageous position you have advocated including on television and in other public appearances despite the confrontation, often not quite appropriate'.

The rector of the church noted that numerous theological works and musical compositions by Metropolitan Hilarion are known to a wide range of the faithful. 'Your work for the good of the Church is a remarkable example of how much a man can manage to do if he concentrates on what is the most important. Your spiritual, public and cultural position is shared by us all', Father Alexander said and wished His Eminence good health and God's help in all his efforts.

In his response, Metropolitan Hilarion said in particular,

'Dear Father Alexander, you have led this parish for already twenty years and one can say that this parish has become a model not only for the capital city of Moscow but for the whole Church. Very much is done at the parish to make people aware of the faith they are called and belong to so that they may consciously participate in divine services. Today I felt and enjoyed the prayer of the congregation and the people's singing along with the choir and I could feel that the faithful heart of each of the congregation was turned to God and their prayer to God was lifted up with one heart and one mouth.

'Regrettably, it does not always happen like this. Indeed, sometimes the service is accomplished only by the clergy who are in the sanctuary with the participation of the choir while the worshippers remain as if passive viewers and listeners to what is going on in the choir, in the sanctuary and on the solea. Actually, the whole church represents a royal priesthood, a chosen and holy people (see I Pet. 2:9) who participate in the divine service. And the highest form of this participation is certainly the Holy Communion. I rejoiced today, seeking how all the present parishioners, beginning from small children to old frosted men and women partook of one Bread and one Cup.

'I would like to thank you for the work you have carried out in the task of charity and social service. It is well known that your parish takes care on a regular basis of the homeless, refugees and the poor and that you, from the bottom of you Christian hearts, share all you have with the poor and the needy.

I would like to thank the choir for their excellent devotional singing during the Divine Liturgy today – the singing which is fully correspondent with the spirit of Orthodox Christian liturgy'.

The DECR chairman congratulated Archpriest Alexander Borisov on the award granted him on the eve, a decorated cross, and wished him to carry the cross of service for many more years, showing people an example of the kind of person a pastor of the Church of Christ should be.

Then Metropolitan Hilarion delivered a sermon on the meaning of the festive liturgy on the Annunciation Day and Lazarus Saturday. Speaking about the forthcoming Passion Week, he said, 'As we are entering the Passion Week, when the long-known words of the Gospel's story about how our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross resound with a special power', we will experience these Gospel's narrations not as a story of the past events, so remote as this universal resurrection may seem to us, but as a story which has a direct bearing on our own life.

'Then let us ask the Lord to grant us this firm faith, this firm hope, this steadfast love which will help us endure all that will be sent to us in our life on earth, which will help us to approach the threshold of death in a dignified way and to step over this threshold and meet over it Christ Himself Whom love with all our nature, Whom we have served with all our life and in Whom we place all our hopes'.

After the service, according to Orthodox tradition, His Eminence and the clergy and parishioners who accompanied him let out doves into the sky over the Tveskaya Square next to the church.

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