



Metropolitan Hilarion: New martyrs and confessors who showed the greatest feat of loyalty to God shine forth in the Church

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On February 5, 2012, the Sunday of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee, the Church also celebrated the Assembly of New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. On that day 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.

Concelebrating were archpriest Kirill Kopeikin, secretary of the Academic Board of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; archpriest Vladimir Shmaliy, vice-rector of the St Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate School; hegumen Silvestr (Stoychev), professor of the Kiev Theological Academy; and clergymen – participants in the professional development course on modern natural science for the faculty of the theological schools.

During the Liturgy a DECR staff member Feodor Shulga was ordained deacon.

After the service Metropolitan Hilarion delivered a sermon, in which he reminded the worshippers about the Parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee: "This Parable tells us what we should feel when we come before God and start praying. Very often we think that we have some merits, at least in comparison with other people, whom we criticize for not living a life in the way our Lord has commanded. And if they are not Christians, we condemn them for not having faith in Christ. Even unwillingly, but we consider ourselves better than our neighbours.

At the same time we are very tolerant to our own ill deeds and are willing to justify ourselves. For example, if we miss the Sunday service or forget to say our morning and evening prayers, we will certainly find an explanation and an excuse: either we were tired or short of time.

The Tax Collector, who came to the church, didn't try to justify himself, he didn't compare himself with other people. He was just aware of being unworthy before God. And the only words he could utter were the words we often say: *God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. And God justified him, not for his deeds, but for his humility. If we treat our neighbours with humility, do not judge them, do not condemn them, we might be able to see them as they are – created in the image of God".

Metropolitan Hilarion also noted that this day the Church “celebrates the commemoration day of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia – these are tens and hundreds of thousands of people, who showed their courage, strong faith and great humility during the years of persecution against the Church.

One of the clerics of our Church, priest-martyr Konstantin Liubomudrov, suffered for his faith like many other Moscow priests: he was shot. Today we venerate him as a saint, we have his holy icon in our Church.

New martyrs and confessors, who showed the greatest feat of loyalty to God, shine forth in the Church and today we glorify them and pray to them as we believe in their constant intercession”.

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