10th anniversary of Metropolitan Hilarion's episcopal consecration marked by grand divine service

On January the 14, 2012, when the Church celebrates the Feast of the Circumcision of Our Lord and the commemoration day of St. Basil the Great, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, marked the 10th anniversary of his the episcopal consecration by leading the festive Divine Liturgy at the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted-in-Bolshaya Ordynka in Moscow.

Among his concelebrants were guests from Local Churches including the Patriarchate of Georgia, Greek Orthodox Church, Polish Orthodox Church, Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands of Slovakia, as well as Moscow representatives of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, Bulgaria, the Czech Lands and Slovakia, and Georgia. He was also assisted by church officials in holy orders.

Present at the service was Italian Ambassador Antionio Zanardi Landi as well as representatives of the scientific community and cultural figures in Moscow.

During the liturgy, the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by Russia's Honoured Artist A. Puzakov sang compositions by Metropolitan Hilarion and N. Golovanov.

After the service, a congratulatory message from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia was read out. His Holiness wrote in particular, 'In maintaining cooperation with Local Orthodox Churches and conducting dialogue with the non-Orthodox, you have focused your attention and support on our brothers and sisters persecuted for their faith, seeking to stop the violence through diplomatic methods'. He also expressed the wish that the Lord might give Metropolitan Hilarion 'spiritual and physical strength to carry out further service for the benefit of His Holy Church in peace and joy'.

Congratulatory messages were also brought from Catholicos-Patriarch Iliya II of All Georgia and Metropolitan Christopher of the Czech Lands and Slovakia.

Speaking on behalf of the clergy and parishioners of the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted, Father Philaret (Tambovsky) thanked Metropolitan Hilarion as rector of the church for his continued concern and care of the church and its clergy and parishioners and expressed the wish that His Eminence might continue to rightly teach the word of Christ's truth for many more years.

Addressing the congregation, Metropolitan Hilarion spoke on the need for archpastors and pastors to emulate St. Basil's commitment to the Church. He thanked all those who took part in the Divine Liturgy, especially those who came from abroad to share in the festive occasion of the 10th anniversary of his episcopal consecration.

'On this day, I would like first of all to thank God for these ten years and for every day of my life. I cannot say that the last decade was easy. The first months of my hierarchal ministry were very difficult, and in the years to follow the Lord sent me problems to solve and difficulties to overcome. And the present task entrusted to me cannot be called easy either. Indeed, it requires everyday vigil, great efforts and diligence. It would be impossible to carry this burden if it were not for God's beneficial power, which helps me in this toil, and the efforts of co-workers in the Department for External Church Relations. Thanks to them, we can carry out missions entrusted to us by the Supreme Authority to guard the sacred boundaries of our Church, to develop fraternal relations with Local Orthodox Churches, to defend Christians in various parts of the world and to do all that is necessary today to do in the field of external church service.

'Today I would like to say grateful words about the late Patriarch Alexy who consecrated me as bishop ten years ago and whom we remember with heart-felt gratitude. I believe that he is praying for us at God's throne and for the Holy Russian Orthodox Church which he led in a worthy and zealous way.

'I would like to express special gratitude today to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia because it was he who initiated my consecration. As God is my witness, and His Holiness knows that I never sought the bishop's dignity. I wanted to be a priest and to do theology but His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, then still the metropolitan in charge of church external relations, insisted that I should become a bishop. First I served abroad, but later, when the Lord ordained that he be the primate of our Holy Church, he entrusted me with a task I am performing to this day – a task difficult and important, requiring one's wholehearted spiritual, mental and physical commitment.

'When a man is consecrated as a deacon or especially as a priest or bishop, he received special grace which helps him to carry out his service and to recoup his human weak resources. As St. Paul says, If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness (2. Cor. 11:30). Whatever we do as servants of the Church of God, is done through the grace which helps us to perform God's task in spite of our human sinfulness and weakness. Thus we become tools of the Lord's hand. It is the best thing that can happen in a human life – to live not by one's own will, not for oneself, but for God and for the Church and to commit oneself to God's hands and become his tool so that He could do His task through us'.

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Hegumen Hilarion (Alfeyev) was elected Bishop of Kerch, vicar of the diocese of Sourozh, by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on December 27, 2001.

On January 7, 2002, the Nativity of Christ, Hegumen Hilarion was elevated to the rank of archimandrite by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad (now Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia) at the Cathedral of the Dormition in Smolensk.

On January 14, 2002, he was consecrated as bishop in the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. The consecration was performed by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia assisted by ten bishops, among them Metropolitan Kirill.

On July 17, 2002, he was appointed Bishop of Podolsk, vicar of the Moscow diocese, head of the Russian Orthodox Church Representation to the European international organizations.

On May 7, 2003, he was appointed Bishop of Vienna and Austria and temporary administrator of the diocese of Budapest and Hungary, while remaining Representative to Brussels.

On March 31, 2009, he was appointed as chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations and permanent member of the Holy Synod with the title of Bishop of Volokolamsk, vicar of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

At the same time, Bishop Hilarion was appointed as rector of the newly-established Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church Post-Graduate and Doctoral School.

On April 9, 2009, he was appointed as rector of the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted-in-Bolshaya Ordynka in Moscow.

On April 20, 2009, he was elevated to the rank of archbishop, and on February 1, 2010 to that of metropolitan.

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