



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk celebrates at the Church of the 'Joy to All the Afflicted' Icon of the Heavenly Queen

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On the night of January 7, the feast of the Nativity of Christ, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the 'Joy to All the Afflicted' Icon of the Mother of God. Rev. Dimitry Ageyev, assistant to the DECR chairman, and clerics of the church concelebrated. Grand Compline and Matins were celebrated in the evening of January 6.

The Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by the Merited Artist of Russia Alexei Puzakov sang at the service.

Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers after the reading from the Gospel. He congratulated them on the feast of the Nativity of Christ that fills the hearts with joy and human nature with the purity of God's presence.

He said that over centuries the whole nations had been searching the way to God. 'There was one nation whom God has entrusted with the mystery of knowing the One God. Thanks to Divine Revelation received through prophets and teachers, these people knew that God is One, that one should fear and honour Him, but a thought that one can love Him had hardly entered their heads.'

'In order to make people understand that God is not far from them, that they can love Him and come closer to Him, to feel Him amongst them, the incarnate Son of God became a man.'

'We comprehend this while looking at the divine countenance of Christ on many icons and reading about Him in Holy Scriptures.

'Any time we recall an event from Christ's life, be it His Nativity, Epiphany, the Entry into Jerusalem, or His Passion on the Cross, death and Resurrection, the Eucharist is the highest point of our celebration. Only those feasts are the true feasts of our spirit at which we partake of the Holy Mysteries. The Lord has left us the Sacrament of the Eucharist so that we can understand the meaning of the events narrated in Gospels and at the same time to comprehend the meaning of the events in our own life.'

"Let us cherish this priceless treasure of the Church – the Eucharist and try to partake as often as possible, at least on feast days and Sundays, remembering that the Lord has brought us to church as He brought the Magi to His manger so that we can change for the better and convey the grace we receive here to other people.'

'Let us thank God for His Incarnation, let us thank God, who over centuries was leading people to salvation and lives amongst us. Let us trust all momentous happenings in our life and rejoice as God is

with us!'

Prior to Holy Communion, Hegumen Filaret (Tambovsky) read out Christmas Message of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and All the Faithful Children of the Russian Orthodox Church.

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