



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: a Christian should treat everybody with love

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On October 16, 2011, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" icon of the Mother of God. Concelebrating were archimandrite Seraphim (Shemyatovsky) of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Hieromonk Gabriel (Bunge) of the Korsun diocese, archpriest Sergiy Zvonarev, DECR secretary for the far-abroad countries, Rev. Dimitry Ageyev, assistant to the DECR chairman, and parish clergy.

As part of the ongoing Intercession Church Music Festival, the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by Russia's Honoured Artist Alexei Puzakov sang the Liturgy by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

At the service the DECR chairman ordained a DECR staff member monk Roman (Kiselev) deacon.

After the Divine Liturgy Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshipers with his archpastoral homily:

"In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters, today in the Gospel's Reading we heard the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ, reminding us how we should treat our neighbors: *If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.* (Lk. 6:32-35). It seems a very difficult commandment to accomplish, as it contradicts our human nature. We treat with kindness and endearing words only those, who do us good. Yet the Lord calls upon to ascend from this stair of natural virtue to a higher level: to love every man, including our enemies. He Himself gave us an example of such love. When hanging on the cross, He prayed for His crucifiers, saying: Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing. (Lk. 23:34).

The Lord wants us to learn how to accept people, who are unkind to us: they do not know what they are doing, and act with malice, because they are blind and not enlightened with the Heaven's light and with God's love. We must love them, just as God loves every man and sends rain both onto righteous ones and sinful ones. His sun rises above and shines for all the people. So, a Christian who follows God's commandments must treat everyone with love, must be a sun for his neighbors, so that they could warm

in his rays. Those who oppose will fade into shadow and darkness, but the sun must shine to everyone, and our love must cover every man, regardless of his conduct and, what is more, of his attitude to us. That is an ideal way of love. And love to enemies, as St Silouan the Athonite reminds us, is a true evidence of a Christian life.

That is what the Holy Church has reminded us of, that is what the Lord Himself tells us. We can not make ourselves love the enemies. We need special power – the Divine power. And we receive it, praying to God and relying on Him. God's grace can transfigure us, heal our infirmity and help us follow His commandments. So let us ask the Lord to grant us love, both to friends and enemies. May the Lord strengthen us to treat every man with kindness. Amen.”

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