



## **Metropolitan Hilarion congratulates Ukrainian Prime Minister Nikolay Azarov on 20th anniversary of Ukraine's independence**

*Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, sent the following congratulatory letter to Ukrainian Prime Minister N. Azarov on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ukraine's independence:*

**To: Mr. N. Ya. Azarov**

**Prime Minister of Ukraine**

Dear Nikolay Yanovich,

From the bottom of my heart I congratulate you on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

The twenty years of Ukraine's existence as an independent state lie on a deep and reliable foundation, which is the historical heritage of the Ukrainian people and their spiritual and cultural traditions which have developed for many centuries. Ukraine is a highly developed country, and she has a great future. The best guarantee to it are such qualities of the Ukrainian national character as generosity, kind-heartedness and diligence.

Orthodoxy in Ukraine has deep historical roots. The baptism of Rus' by the holy Prince Vladimir, which took place in 988 in Kiev, became the basis for the further development of the statehood and culture of Eastern Slavic nations. And today the Orthodox Church makes an enormous contribution to the strengthening of spiritual principles in Ukrainian society and to the consolidation of the Ukrainian people.

I sincerely hope for continued cooperation between the Orthodox Church and the Ukrainian State in the same constructive spirit as before for the benefit of the Ukrainian people.

From my heart I wish you good health and spiritual fortitude, and may the Lord bless your work.

With profound respect,

**+ Hilarion**

**Metropolitan of Volokolamsk**

**Chairman**

**Department for External Church Relations**

**Moscow Patriarchate**

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/55288/>