



## **Metropolitan Hilarion: Lack of faith is an illness, while faith is spiritual health**

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On 31 July 2011, the commemoration day of the Holy Fathers of the Seven Ecumenical Councils, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), celebrated Divine Liturgy at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" icon of the Mother of God. Concelebrating were archimandrite Kirill (Govorun), first deputy chairman of the Education Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church; archimandrite Andrei (Krekhov), abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery in Ryazan; hegumen Filipp (Vasiltsev) rector of St. Nicholas Patriarchal metochion of the Russian Orthodox Church in Sofia, Rev. Dimitry Ageyev, assistant to the DECR chairman, and clerics of the church. Bishop Anatoly of Kagul and Komrat prayed at the divine service.

After the Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated the worshippers on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers and addressed them with his archpastoral homily:

"We have heard today the Gospel reading telling us of how the Lord healed two blind men, who cried, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David!' The Lord asked them, 'Do you believe that I am able to do this?' They said to him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then he touched their eyes and said, 'According to your faith let it be done to you.' And their eyes were opened (Mt 9:27-29).

"This parable reminds us of the power of faith. Man without faith is blind; he does not see either his own sins, or God's Providence. Even if he happens to see a miracle with his own eyes, he would try to explain it either by coincidence or by natural cause of events because his heart has become hard and his eyes would not see the light of God. Faith enables people to see the essence of everything and also God's Providence in his life. Faith opens human eyes to see sins and imperfection, to repent of them and be healed like people are cured of physical diseases.

"As a matter of fact, lack of faith is an illness, while faith is spiritual health. Therefore, when we meet an unbeliever – and there are many of such people – we should understand that lack of faith is not their fault. Lack of faith is like an illness either inborn, or acquired. Indeed, we do not blame sick people, but wish them recovery and help them to recover. We must understand that lack of faith is a spiritual blindness, however a curable one. God is the healer, but we are His assistants. People will believe if they not only hear our nice words, but see that we live like true Christians fulfilling the commandments of

God. But the most important to them is to see how our faith in Christ transforms our life.

“It is impossible to believe through books or someone’s pervasive words. To learn that God exists and opens eyes of the blind is possible only from one’s own religious experience. This is a great mystery, the heart of which no man can perceive.

“Let us pray to the Lord for the salvation of all people and for their learning the truth. Let us commit ourselves and one another to God and try to see God’s Providence in the events of our life. Let us repent of our sins and beseech the Lord to heal us of our physical and spiritual sickness. Let s grow in faith for the good of ourselves and of those around us.”

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