



Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates Divine Liturgy at Russian Embassy in the capital of Jamaica

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On 22 May 2011, the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman and the commemoration day of the translation of the relics of St. Nicholas of Myra in Lycia, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR) celebrated Divine Liturgy at the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Jamaica. In compliance with the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of 26 July 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion leads the Moscow Patriarchate's delegation at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.

Celebrating together with Metropolitan Hilarion were archpriest Nikolai Danilevich, secretary of the DECR of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Rev. Dmitry Sizonenko, acting DECR secretary for inter-Christian relations; hierodeacon Ioann (Kopeikin), assistant to the DECR MP chairman. Praying at the service was archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev, representative of the Moscow Patriarchate at the World Council of Churches and international institutions in Geneva; Hymns of the liturgy were sung in Znamenny chant by Leonid Sevastianov, executive director of the St. Gregory the Theologian Charity Foundations.

Some thirty people attended Divine Liturgy at the Russian Embassy, including Mr. V. Zotin, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Russia to Jamaica; diplomats, staff of the Embassy with their families, and representatives of the RUSAL United Company currently operating in Jamaica. All of them received Holy Communion.

After the liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion reminded those present that the Orthodox Church commemorates St. Nicholas and congratulated those whose name-day it is on receiving Holy Communion, including archpriest Nikolai Danilevich, and wished him to worthily represent the Ukrainian Orthodox Church at various international forums in future.

In his sermon the DECR chairman spoke of a special responsibility of those working far away from homeland. Their work, of the diplomats in particular, as well as military men and ministers of the church, is not just a work, but a real ministry.

"What links a man with his homeland? Family ties, reminiscences, professional contacts. But it is the Church that helps us not to lose touch with our homeland. The Church is a spiritual space, for which there is no distance and which destroys all barriers," Metropolitan Hilarion stated and continued, saying

that good deeds are the only treasure that we can take with us to life eternal. "People to whom we were kind will remember us and pray for us. Therefore it is important to believe, to go to church, make confession and receive Holy Communion, which unites with God as nothing else."

"Solemn divine services have been celebrated throughout the world today, marking the commemoration day of a great man of God – St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, one of the most venerated saints of the Orthodox Church, and I am most happy that the first-ever Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Russian Embassy in Jamaica," Metropolitan Hilarion said.

He thanked Ambassador Zotin for an opportunity to celebrate and wished him God's help in diplomatic field and in family life. Metropolitan Hilarion wished God's help to all those present and called them to be close to the Church, as the Lord will comfort them in sorrows and trials, and life would not seem meaningless or joyless. He concluded his sermon with Paschal greeting "Christ is Risen!"

On behalf of the Embassy staff, Ambassador Zotin cordially thanked the DECR chairman for celebrating Divine Liturgy. "This is a unique event, as its is the first- ever celebration in the Soviet and later the Russian Embassy in Jamaica." He noted.

Fraternal repast followed at the residence of the ambassador. Metropolitan Hilarion and Mr. Zotin discussed matters of mutual interest.

That same day the DECR chairman departed for Moscow.

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