



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk meets with students of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Humanitarian University

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On March 30, 2011, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk met with students of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Humanitarian University's Faculty of Theology. Present at the meeting were also Bishop Panteleimon of Smolensk and Vyazma, head of the Synodal department for charity and social service, Archpriest Vladimir Vorobyev, rector of the university, and university professors.

Metropolitan Hilarion congratulated Archpriest Vladimir Vorobyev on his 70th birthday and presented him with a pectoral cross.

In his address to the students, His Eminence Hilarion spoke about the reform of theological education, which has been underway in the Russian Church for almost twenty years now. A new impulse to it was given a year and a half ago by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia who outlined a clear vector of its development. 'The Holy Synod at its recent meeting adopted some framework documents. They have not been finalized yet and will be perfected in the process of their testing by practice. The reform of theological education will be carried out in conformity with these documents', Metropolitan Hilarion said.

He described the University as an educational institution of a new type which complies with the standards demanded of Russian and, to a considerable extent, Western theological scholarship.

According to the DECR Chairman, 'one of the aims of theological education the reform in the Russian Church is to bring it in conformity with the standards existing in secular science as well as Western theological scholarship'.

The archpastor underscored that the St. Tikhon's University stands in the forefront of the reform of theological education, setting an example for other educational institutions. Thus, it was the experience of St. Tikhon's University that was used in founding the Sts Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate and Doctoral School, of which Metropolitan Hilarion is rector. Today these two educational institutions maintain a close cooperation working out together a Master's program and a strategy of further development. Metropolitan Hilarion expressed hope that the Postgraduate School and St. Tikhon's University would develop and deepen this cooperation by exchanging experience and teachers and by

enrolling the University's graduates in the Postgraduate School.

According to the Metropolitan, today's world stands in an acute need of witness to the gospel's values because of psychological and even linguistic barriers dividing the Church and the secular society. 'The Church lives up the notions, ideas and experiences alien to many people today. And it is rather difficult for them to cross the line separating this world from the church world. To make this step they need guides, which they are lacking. We need bridges to be built between the world of the Church and the secular society', he said.

'You, the students of an Orthodox university, can become these guiding bridges as you receive a broad range of knowledge in very diverse areas. One of the missionary tasks of the Church is to educate people for ability to carry out enormous and necessary missionary work commanded by the Lord Himself while living in the world and holding secular positions', the Metropolitan said.

In his address Metropolitan Hilarion reminded the students that teaching foreign languages is one of the priority tasks in the theological education system. 'Today as boundaries between civilizations, nations and people of different language groups disappear, the world is becoming ever more integral. To speak in a language of other people and to understand people of other faiths and confessions is a very important task for the modern Christian', he stressed.

Developing this idea, the archpastor noted, 'Today we cannot retreat into our own context, in our own Orthodox sub-culture to which we are accustomed and from which we find it so difficult to come out. The world today lives according to laws different from those of the Church. The task of the modern Christian is – without forgoing your faith, without indulgence towards yourselves, without compromises – to learn to talk with people in a language intelligible for them and to convey to them your own church experience in a way they could accept. What is needed for this, along with knowledge, is inner motivation and missionary spirit'.

The DECR Chairman expressed the wish that students may always have missionary motivation and reminded them that true Christians should carry out their apostolic ministry, be they lay or ordained and regardless of their sex, age and other factors.

After his address, Metropolitan Hilarion answered numerous questions from the audience.

In conclusion of the meeting, Archpriest Vladimir Vorobyev gave to the Post Graduate School some publications of St. Tikhon's University.

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