Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: The Lord grants us spiritual spring every year to be on the way to repentance

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On 9 March 2011, Wednesday of the first week in Lent, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR), celebrated the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God. Rev. Dimitry Ageyev, assistant to the DECR chairman, and clerics of the parish concelebrated.

Before the divine service, Metropolitan Hilarion venerated the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God and the reliquary which contains the particles of the Robe of the Lord, the Robe of the Most Holy Mother of God, the table of the Last Supper, the Holy Sepulchre, the Thorn, and other holy objects.

The singing of the Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by the Honoured Artist of Russia Alexei Puzakov included "Let my prayer be set forth" and "Now the Powers of Heaven" composed by Metropolitan Hilarion during his pilgrimage to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Vilnius in 1987.

After the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers, saying:

> "In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
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> Dear brothers and sisters! We have celebrated the first Lenten Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. The Church has introduced it for Lenten week days on which the Eucharist is not celebrated in order to sustain our body and spirit by the Communion of the Life-Giving Body and Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
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> "The springtime of the fast has dawned." By these words the Church reminds us of the fact that Lenten time coincides with spring. What can melt a cold heart, but the rays of the life-giving light from the Sun of Righteousness – Christ our God?
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> "Repentance is a means introduced by the Church for illumining our hearts by Divine light. An unrepentant man does not comprehend his sins and cannot change his life. Until he changes his life, the rays of the Sun of Righteousness would not penetrate his darkened soul and melt the ice of his heart.

“Lenten time is given to us to pray even more ardently and do more good deeds of charity than on other days. We should correct all our mistakes in relations with people. The Church reminds us in stances that the true fasting is not only abstinence, but also the sharing of bread with the hungry and shelter with the homeless, which means our help to the neighbours who need it.

“The Lord grants us the spiritual spring every year to be on the way to repentance and to renew ourselves spiritually so that the rays of the Divine light could easily penetrate our souls as the Lord wishes to abide in us, while our sinful darkness and inner coldness hamper the Divine light to illumine us.

“Let us be worthy of our Lenten pilgrimage. The Church leads us on the way to salvation in divine services, caring to everyone to come to the Kingdom where the springtime is eternal, where the sun always shines not being clouded, and where all the faithful, being one with the Lord, are exulting. Amen.”

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