



Metropolitan Hilarion: Lenten pursuit should be started with the feeling of reconciliation and love

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On March 6, 2011, the Sunday of Forgiveness, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations, celebrated Vespers with the Rite of Forgiveness at the Church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted.

After the service, His Eminence delivered the following sermon:

‘Entering in the Lenten pursuit today, we ask God and each other for forgiveness. Why should we ask God for forgiveness? – Because every day and every hour we violate the commandments He has given people for their salvation. Every day we repeat Adam’s sin by disobeying the voice of God Who speaks to us through our conscience and by doing evil things to ourselves and our neighbours. The time of Lent is given for us to repent of all sins we have committed, to ask God for forgiveness, to reconcile with one another and to begin a new life, for repentance is not only contrition for what has been done but also a change of the mind and the mindset and the way of life. The way of repentance leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the beginning of our Lenten effort we should also ask each other for forgiveness, for indeed, according to the apostle, *whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen* (1 Jn. 4:20). How often does Christ come to us in the appearance of an ordinary earthly person who needs our compassion and sympathy and support or at least our kind word, but we do not find in ourselves inner resources to say this kind word, to treat this person with compassion! On many occasions Christ came to us but we passed Him by, turning away from Him. We did not want to hear about the needs, misfortune or grief of the person in whose appearance the Lord came to us. And for all this we should ask God’s forgiveness.

The Lord has put every one of us in a certain life situation but we all meet with people in our life, be they our loved ones or those who we meet at work or occasional passersby we meet on our way. These are people we meet during our travels, people we know through printed works and public appearances. And we never know what echo our word will produce and cannot even imagine how many people could be offended by our voluntary or involuntary action or words or by our silence or passivity. We cannot count all those whom we offended or insulted, who moved

away from us with a heavy heart. We cannot gather them all together now and ask for their forgiveness. There are sins and offences we cannot atone for before our neighbours but can only ask God's forgiveness for them in the hope that He will console the ones we once hurt so that their souls may be reconciled just as the soul of each of us should be reconciled.

On the Sunday of Forgiveness, we should first of all ask each other, our loved ones and all those close to us for forgiveness. Whether we are guilty or not, whether we feel our guilt or not, let us asked our neighbours for forgiveness so that peace may come to us and those around us”.

On the eve of Lent, Metropolitan Hilarion asked his parishioners for forgiveness. Speaking as rector of the Church of Our Lady the Joy of All the Afflicted on behalf of its clergy and his own behalf, he said:

‘I ask for forgiveness all those who could read or hear something I said in public and become tempted by it or who, having misunderstood what I said, became upset. I ask for forgiveness all those who met me and could move away with sorrow and who could hear this word through the mass media.

On behalf of the clergy of our church I ask forgiveness for the occasions when we could not find in ourselves enough strength to give due pastoral care and to show sympathy for you. I ask forgiveness for the fact that we not always prove to be up to our holy orders, not always give due attention to divine services, for the fact that we have no time or inner spiritual resources to give appropriate attention to each or you’.

His Eminence Hilarion also asked his parishioners to make allowances for the human weaknesses of the clergy, remembering that they are ordinary people with their own weaknesses and shortcomings.

The archpastor called the faithful to forgive all as the Lord Jesus Christ commanded and to enter Lent with heartfelt reconciliation and love.

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