Metropolitan Hilarion and the Primate of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia concelebrate in Karlovy Vary

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On February 15, 2011, the Day of the Meeting of Our Lord, His Beatitude Christopher, Metropolitan of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Russian Orthodox Church representation in Karlovy Vary. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relation, concelebrated, with the blessing of His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

Among the numerous worshippers were Russian General Consul in Karlovy Vary S. Scherbakov, and Karlovy Vary Vice-Governor Jaroslav Borko.

During the Lesser Entrance, Metropolitan Hilarion placed a mitre on Archpriest Vladimir Ambrosimov and during the Great Entrance he ordained Pavel Gempal as deacon, with the blessing of Metropolitan Christopher.

After the liturgy the head of the Czech Church greeted Metropolitan Hilarion, saying in particular,

'You are the second Metropolitan of Volokolamsk to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in Karlovy Vary. The first was His Eminence Pitirim, who led the service in this church when in 2007 we marked the centenary of this church.

'For us, Czechs, Russians, Serbs and people from other countries, Karlovy Vary is first of all a place of prayer. This church was built in accordance with the desire of people who wanted to pray, who could not live or spend their holidays in this city without prayer. Among those who took part in the building of this beautiful church were also saints: Russian Emperor Nicholas II, his wife and many others.

We are very glad to have you, dear Vladyka, among us today. And though it is your first visit to this city, you have already gone down history of the Czech Orthodoxy by ordaining Hierodeacon Isaiah.

I hope that during your stay in Karlovy Vary and Prague you will see once again how we love you and respect our spiritual mother, the Russian Orthodox Church'.

The DECR chairman, in his turn, delivered an archpastoral homily. He said in particular,

‘First of all I would like to convey to your Beatitude and to you, dear fathers, brothers and sisters, greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, his blessing and wish that the liturgy may continue in this holy church as it did for over one hundred years and that it may continue to be filled with parishioners and that the Lord may bless each one who comes to it.

Today, the Day of the Meeting of Our Lord, we remember the events described in the Gospel of St. Luke: the Infant Jesus Christ was brought to the temple to be dedicated to God, and the righteous Simeon, to whom it had been promised *that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah* (Lk. 2:26) took Him in his arms and said a prayer, which we pronounce during each vespers: *Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace* (Lk. 2:29).

One’s life is meaningful and precious only if one meets Christ. And only those who have communicated with the Lord here on earth spiritually and physically can pass away to Him in peace, in the knowledge that they will meet Him there as well. Each of us should understand that the value of our life on earth is determined by our ability or disability to come close to Christ. We have heard today the striking words: ‘It is not the old man that holds Me but I hold him, for he asks Me for remission’. Jesus Christ lay in arms of the righteous Simeon in the image of a helpless infant but He as the Lord and Almighty held and holds the whole universe and each human being in His right hand. And when we as clergy hold in our hands in the sanctuary the Most Pure Body of the Lord Jesus Christ we cannot but remember these words. The Lord was pleased to entrust Himself to us and to give his Body into our hands. The Lord gives Himself to us so that our life may be meaningful and filled with His divine presence.

On the Day of the Meeting of Our Lord, the Church reminds us of that meeting of man with God which takes place every time when we partake of the holy Gifts of Christ, when we hold the Lord in our hands but He holds us in His right hands, when we take Him into us and He comes to fill the whole of our human nature, spiritual and physical, with His presence and grace.

Therefore, let us try to partake of the Holy Gifts of Christ as frequently as possible so that we may be united with God not only in spirit but also body, so that His divine presence may spread through us to other people, for the Lord has called each of us to carry on the apostolic ministry. The Lord has entrusted Himself to us so that we may hand Him over to other people, so that we may share the grace that He gives us in such abundance in His holy church.

Your Beatitude, it is a special joy for me to celebrate together with you in this historic church, which has been for many years the representation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Czech land. This resort town attracted Russian aristocrats as far back as in the 19th century. This church was built with the help

of the Russian imperial family, and many representatives of the Russian nobility took part in its construction and decoration. Today thousands of our compatriots come here to lift up prayers and take part in the liturgy.

You, Your Beatitude, as Primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, take paternal care of this and other churches in this land. At the same time, this church serves as a bridge between our two Churches, reminding us of the spiritual unity that brings us together. I wholeheartedly greet Your Beatitude and wish you God’s help. May the Lord preserve you for many good years.

And to you, dear brothers and sisters, I wish God’s help, so that the Lord may bless every one of you on your life journey and God’s grace may preserve and guide you to the Kingdom of God. Amen’.

DECR Communication Service

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