



## **Primate of the Orthodox Church in America celebrates Divine Liturgy at the Moscow church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God**

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On January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011, His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah of All America and Canada officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God, Bolshaya Ordynka Str., Moscow. Concelebrating with His Beatitude were rector of the church, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations (DECR); Bishop Melchizedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania (Orthodox Church in America; archimandrite Zacchaeus (Wood), representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Rev. Dimitry Ageyev, assistant to the DECR chairman; Rev. Igor Yakimchuk, DECR secretary for Inter-Orthodox relations; Rev. Dimitry Sizonenko, head of the DECR secretariat for Inter-Christian relations; archpriest Miloš Vesin (Serbian Orthodox Church); Rev. Kirill Tatarka, secretary of the Hungarian diocese; and clerics of the parish.

His Beatitude Jonah venerated the 'Joy to All the Afflicted' Icon before the divine service.

The Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by an honoured artist of Russia Alexei Puzakov and the Serbian choir "St. Stephan of Decani" with its artistic director Tamara Petievic sang at the service.

Attending the service were Elica Kuriak, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Serbia to Russia, and Gianfranco Facco-Bonetti, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta to the Russian Federation.

Metropolitan Hilarion greeted the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America after the Divine Liturgy, saying:

"Your Beatitude, dear Vladyka Metropolitan Jonah! Your Grace Bishop Melchizedek! Dear fathers, brothers and sisters!

"I would like to cordially greet you, Your Beatitude, at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God. You have visited it earlier, but celebrated here for the first time. The church has an old-line history. It was built on the road of the Russian people to the Golden Horde, hence the name of

the street. The church of St. Varlaam of Khutyn was standing on this site, later a kind of absorbed by a larger church of the Transfiguration of the Lord. Its right side-altar is dedicated to this great saint, and the left one – to the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God, deeply venerated in the capital city of Moscow.

"This church has been always full of people coming here every day to pray before the miraculous icon and be healed, as it has been known for many great miracles. This church was never closed, even at the hard times of persecution for the faith. Divine services were celebrated, and thousands upon thousands of people used to come here to be united with Christ through partaking of His Holy Mysteries and to have peace and consolation in sorrows from the Most Holy Mother of God while praying before her miraculous icon.

"We are happy to greet you as the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America that received an autocephalous status from the Russian Orthodox Church forty years ago and is bringing beauty and power of Orthodox to the American people. Compared with other Autocephalous Churches, your Church is young. However, having shone forth in it were many zealots of the faith and renowned theologians, whose books have been translated into Russia, and many believers here enjoy reading them.

"Your Beatitude, the people of God have elected you as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, and you have been serving them with dignity. We would like you to come to Moscow more often. The representation of your Church is located in the same street as the church in which we are celebrating. We are glad to welcome your companions, and you are our most welcome high dear guest."

On behalf of His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Metropolitan Hilarion wished His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah God's help in his primatial ministry. On behalf of the parish and on his own behalf he wished the high guests many good years to serve the Church of Christ on the American continent and presented the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America with a copy of the "Joy of All the Afflicted" Icon as a keepsake of his visit.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah said it was his great joy to pray with Metropolitan Hilarion and noted the DECR chairman's labours in the field of Christ. He underscored the importance of strong ties between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church in America and expressed his gratitude for the gift so precious as a church in San Francisco where the relics of St. John of Shanghai repose is dedicated to that same icon.