Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk leads the Assemble Day of the Postgraduate and Doctoral School of the Russian Orthodox Church

On 15 December 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, rector of Ss Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate and Doctoral School of the Russian Orthodox Church, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist at the Patriarchal Metochion of the Chernigov Wonderworkers.

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Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were Bishop Aleksandr of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky, a vicar of the Kiev metropolia; Bishop Veniamin of Borisov, a vicar of the Minsk diocese; archimandrite Sergiy (Govorun), deputy chairman of the Education Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church and head of the chair of theology of the Postgraduate and Doctoral School; vice-rector archpriest Vladimir Shmaliy; Rev. Sergiy Zvonarev, deputy head of the chair of external church relations and DECR secretary for far abroad countries; Rev. Stefan Vaneian, head of the chair of church art and archeology; many ordained students; and clerics of the Metochion.

Praying at the church were faculty, students, and staff of the Postgraduate School.

After the divine service, Metropolitan Hilarion delivered a homily, saying:

"Dear fathers, brothers, and sisters! I cordially greet you at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Prophet, and Forerunner of the Lord. The church is now the one of the Postgraduate School with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

"We have celebrated the Divine Liturgy and prayed to God for His blessing upon our work and studies, and for the prosperity of our educational institution. We have a lot to do, as both churches of the metochion needs restoration, and its territory – improvement. We have made repairs work in a small building for classes, but other building should be repaired, and I ask you to be patient while repairs and restoration are going on.

"Our educational institution was established less than two years ago on the invitation and with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the basis of the Postgraduate Scholl at the Department for External Church Relations. Here are over one hundred and twenty students in the Postgraduate and Doctoral School, studying in doctor's and candidate's programmes and at the course of advanced

studies. In addition, a master's programme was introduced with the blessing of His Holiness to train young people for subsequent study.

"Dear fathers, brothers and sisters! We should exert common efforts to create an educational institution of a new type while preserving the best traditions of our theology and blending it with the education process going on in the European countries. We should create an educational institution to meet both national and European education standards described in the Bologna declaration that guides the restructuring of the entire education system in Europe.

"Our students have graduated from the higher secular or theological institutions. This means they have shaped as human persons. What can our school offer them? It can teach a person to work independently. Unfortunately, many secular and theological educational institutions do not pay enough attention to this, and the graduates are crammed with information, but lack a skill to orientate themselves in scholarly work, as they are not accustomed to independent research, but to assiduous dogmatism, reading books, listening to lectures and repeating that what their teachers have told them.

"The task of the Postgraduate School is to develop creative thinking and an ability to research and evaluate by themselves. Therefore, we pay main attention to original work of the students rather than to lectures and seminars. All students have academic advisers. They can direct the students, suggest which books they should read and how to write their theses, but thee cannot take upon themselves the research work. The students study history of the Church, patrology, external church relations, and many other disciplines, which are not only science-applied, but also are of practical meaning for the life of our Church.

"Our Church is a multinational church of many million believers. It lives in the constantly developing and changing society and in different states, each of which has its specific features, different conditions and political and economic situation. The Church should be in demand everywhere and not perceived as a product of foreign influence. The Church should be flesh of the flesh of people and of the land where it brings its ministry.

"You, our students, should study not only for yourselves, but for the Church, as the Church today needs educated clerics and bishops as never before. It needs people who can give account of their hope to all who put questions to them. Today, not only believers ask questions, but the whole world. Different people and the mass media ask questions, and we must be able to explain our faith to them not from books, but from our own experience. To answer their questions, we must know our spiritual and theological traditions and be aware of the challenges that each Orthodox Christian and the Church as a whole may encounter.

"The Ss Cyril and Methodius Postgraduate and Doctoral School is an educational institution of the Russian Orthodox Church. Therefore, science is not a goal in itself of our work. Our goal is to educate the new generation of clerics and church workers capable of meeting the challenges of our time. It is necessary to study theological and other subjects and to learn foreign languages. I repeat that we have demanded and shall demand considerate learning of languages. Each of you should speak at least one foreign language and be able to read in several. When traveling abroad, you will not feel lost, but will be able to communicate with different people. New cultures will be opened to you and your world outlook will broaden. Indeed, pastors and all Christians today must have a broad outlook.

"I wish our educational institution to be a centre of the true Christian education as Ss Cyril and Methodius, our heavenly patrons, understood it. They came to the lands where pagans lived. They preached the Gospel, taught people to read and write and to perceive the truths of Christian faith. Following the example of the saint brothers from Thessaloniki, we should teach people to perceive Orthodox faith not only as the heritage of our predecessors or a cultural phenomenon, but first and foremost as "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6).

"The Lord Jesus Christ should be the core of our education. St. Gregory the Theologian said that he had gained all knowledge of East and West and put it at Christ's feet. We, likewise, are gaining knowledge not to show our education and boast of it before those who lack it; our goal is to bring all knowledge, all our abilities and skills to the service to the Church and put them at Christ's feet.

"May Lord grant each of us to be a true servant of the Church of Christ and be diligent in studies. May the Lord bless our work."

Archimandrite Sergiy (Govorun) greeted Metropolitan Hilarion on behalf of the faculty and students, thanked him for his labours undertaken for the development of theological education and presented a bouquet of flowers to him.

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, rector of the Postgraduate School, performed the rite of blessing of the premises, gave certificates to all students, and shared fraternal meal with the faculty and students. Also, he received the students and staff individually.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/56277/