



## Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk meets with Orthodox youth from Caucasus

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On November 25, 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, DECR chairman, met with Orthodox youth from the Caucasus, at the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations. Participating in the meeting were the president of the Union of Georgians in Russia, Mr. M. Khubitia, and members of the organization 'The Iberians – the Generation for the Future of Georgia'.

Before the meeting began, the Lord's Prayer was said in Georgian. Metropolitan Hilarion welcomed Georgian young people, saying in particular,

'In spite of the problems existing today and difficulties on the political level, there are still spiritual ties and spiritual unity, which have existed for centuries, binding in friendship the people of Georgia with the peoples of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other neighbouring states, which come today under the canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Russians and Georgians are Orthodox nations. Therefore, the spiritual unity existing between us cannot be shaken by any developments taking place on the political level. I believe our common task is to reinforce this spiritual unity. In the history of our nations there have been many political circumstances and twists and turns but they all are now in the past. That which unites us is present with us today and will stay tomorrow – it is our Orthodox faith. We should do all that we can to reinforce the Orthodox faith and spiritual ties between our nations in spite of all difficulties in today's situation.

The Russian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Orthodox Church are in the state of active interaction and cooperation. Our mutual contacts in the recent time have not ceased but rather intensified. In the beginning of 2010, Archimandrite Roman came to Tbilisi to take pastoral care of the Russian-speaking diaspora in Georgia, and at the same time Archimandrite Vakhtang came to Moscow to take pastoral care of the very large Georgian diaspora residing in the Russian capital city. There have been many visits of Georgian hierarchs to the Russian Orthodox Church, many joint divine services, also with the participation of our Patriarch Kirill and hierarchs of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Recently I together with a delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church have been to Georgia for the celebrations marking the millennium of the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in Mtskheta. I visited several dioceses, monasteries and holy places and had a talk with the Catholicos and Patriarch of All Georgia, Iliya II, whom I have known since my boyhood. In my archives there is a photo in which he celebrates

and I, a 15 old, stand next to him, holding a candle. These are indelible good remembrances. And today, almost 30 years later, I come to Georgia with warm feelings. I would like very much that our spiritual ties may develop and become even stronger.

You represent the younger generation. It means that you hold in your hands the future of your country. The way in which you will live and raise your children will determine to a large extent the destiny of Georgia, Russian-Georgian relations and relations between our two Churches.

Remember that our unity in Christ and the unity of the true and salvific Orthodox faith, which unites our nations, is much more important than all that can divide us today. I hope that the present difficulties will pass and this unity will be preserved and consolidated. This is my admonition and wish to you'.

Then the DECR chairman answered questions. One of them was about the saints who are venerated in both the Russian and Georgian Churches. His Eminence mentioned St. Nina Equal-to-the-Apostles and the founders of Georgian monasticism – 13 Syrian fathers who came to Georgia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and founded monasteries throughout the country, as well as the Holy Protomartyr George. He said,

'Our common saint, the Holy Protomartyr George, was neither Russian nor Georgian. He lived in the 3d century in Cappadocia. Both Georgians and Russians including Muscovites venerate him as their patron saint'.

In conclusion of the meeting, Mr. Khubutia, speaking on behalf of the Iberian diaspora, thanked Metropolitan Hilarion for the warm welcome and words of edification.

*DECR Communication Service*

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