Metropolitan Hilarion officiates at celebration of 120th anniversary of Cathedral of the Resurrection in Narva

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On 14 September 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriachate's Department for External Church Relations, currently on a visit to Estonia with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, officiated at the Divine Liturgy in the Narva Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ for the 120th anniversary of the church.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were Bishop Merkury of Zaraisk, chairman of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechization; Bishop Lazar of Narva, a vicar of the Tallinn diocese; archimandrite Tikhon (Sekretarev), abbot of the Pskov Monastery of the Caves; hegumen Mitrofan (Shkurin), abbot of the Monastery of the Dormition in Lipetsk; archpriest Nikolai Golovastikov, a member of the Synod of the Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate; and clergymen of the Estonian Metropolia.

After the Liturgy, Bishop Lazar told all those present about the history of the Cathedral of the Resurrection. It was founded in 1890 to commemorate the meeting between the Russian Emperor Alexander III and German Emperor Wilhelm II. Consecrated in 1896, it was never closed.

Bishop Lazar expressed hope for the DECR chairman's visit to be conducive to reconciliation among the Orthodox Christians of Estonia so that they could with one mouth and one heart to glorify the heavenly Father.

Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers with archpastoral homily:

"Your Graces Bishops Lazar and Merkury! Very Reverend Father Tikhon, abbot of the Pskov Dormition Monastery of the Caves! Dear brothers and sisters!

My heart was trembling when I crossed the threshold of this church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy.

"Bishop Lazar reminded us of the history of the Cathedral of the Resurrection. Indeed, all churches have the history of their own, and when we attend the Divine Liturgy, we become a part of this history and communicate in prayer and spirit with people who built this church and prayed in it.

This living link of times is felt strongly in the house of God. As we come to it, we feel close to all human

persons, both who are here and those departed who remain a part of our life, as God teaches us that people do not die. As they pass to the other world, they do not disappear or perish, but live and wait us so that we, who loved these people here on the earth, would anticipate eternity without fear and awe, being aware of our meeting with our near and dear there.

"Indeed, church embraces all, both the living and the dead; church embraces the past, the present, and the future.

"I was happy to see at the Liturgy many young people and children studying in Sunday school at the Cathedral. This means that the Orthodox faith, which our ancestors cherished and preserved sometimes at the risk of their lives, will be passed on to our descendants.

"The continuity of spiritual experience and true faith does not stop, but passes from one generation to another thanks to the church sacraments, sermons, and constant prayers. We believe that the holy Orthodox faith will pass to our children and grandchildren, that spiritual experience will continue, passing the truth of Orthodoxy from one generation to another.

"The Church of Christ of which Christ said that the gates of Hades will not prevail against it, will live for ever, and the truth of the holy Orthodox faith will be proclaimed on our sinful earth to the end of the age. When it come, the Divine Liturgy will be celebrated in the Kingdom of the Heavenly Father, where all people, even those who did not love each other or were at enmity, will be united.

"Enmity and conflicts come to us either from the devil or from our imperfection, while love and truth come from God/

"The Lord said: 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they be called children of God' (Mt 5:9). Blessed are those who bring peace and love to people, conciliate disputes, confront evil, and do not repay anyone evil for evil. One needs special strength, humility, and patience, but it is for this that the Lord has brought us to this world.

"When we learn of a conflict, we should understand that our task is to bring peace and to lead people from conflict and confrontation to peaceful cooperation. Whatever happens on earth should reflect that what happens in heaven, where Divine love triumphs.

"We celebrated the beginning of the ecclesiastical new year today. It brings the believers closer to the great feasts dedicated to the Mother of God, the first being her Nativity, to the Lord, and the saints. All these feasts teach the truth of Holy Orthodoxy, true faith and virtue.

"All church feasts and all the days on which the divine service is celebrated, remind us of the heavenly world. We are called through prayers and Holy Mysteries to partake of this world where the Lord Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Mother of God, all the saints, and our late near and dear ones await us."

Metropolitan Hilarion presented Bishop Lazar with a *panagia*, and the Cathedral – with an icon of Ss Peter and Febronia.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/56709/