Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk officiates at the celebration of the centenary of the Dormition Cathedral in Pühtica Convent

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On 12 September 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, officiated at the celebration of the centenary of the Cathedral in the Pühtica Convent of the Dormition of the Mother of God. Concelebrating with His Eminence at the Divine Liturgy were Bishop Merkury of Zaraisk, chairman of the Synodal Department for Religious Education and Catechization; Bishop Lazar of Narva, a vicar bishop of the Tallinn diocese; archimandrite Tikhon (Sekretarev), abbot of the Pskov Monastery of the Caves; archpriest Rauna Pietarinen, rector of the Joensuu Orthodox Seminary (Orthodox Church of Finland); hegumen Mitrofan (Shkurin), abbot of the Monastery of the Dormition in Lipetsk; clergymen of the Pühtica Convent and of the Estonian Orthodox Church.

Singing at the divine service were choir of the Pühtica Convent and male choir of the Resurrection Cathedral in Narva.

At the Lesser Entrance, Metropolitan Hilarion elevated hieromonk Samuil (Karaska) of the Laura of the Holy Trinity and St. Sergius to the rank of hegumen. Requiem service for the founders and inhabitants of the convent was celebrated after the liturgy, as well as a thanksgiving prayer service and a procession with the cross round the cathedral.

Metropolitan Hilarion read out a congratulatory address of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and presented Hegumeness Varvara (Trofimova), the abbess of the convent, an ornamented pectoral cross, a gift from the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan Hilarion said in his address:

"Your Graces, dear mother hegumeness, dear reverend fathers, brothers and sisters!

"I have arrived here today with the blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and to convey primatial blessings from our Father, an angel of our Church, who visits the ancient land of Yaroslavl and is praying for all of us there.

"This holy abode has seen a lot during its history, and we have prayed for all who served here, for the hegumenesses and sisters, who had prayed, worked and found eternal rest here. In our prayers we remembered in particular the benefactors of the Pühtica Convent and all those who served in it. We offered prayers for the late Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia, for whom this convent was like his own home. He had often come here to stay and celebrate divine services. The Convent, together with the entire Russian Orthodox Church, cherishes his memory.

"Reverend mother Varvara, we know that your convent has been a leading light of Orthodoxy in Estonia for many decades. Prayers and spiritual had continued here during the hard years of theomachist power. Many sisters of this convent have become hugumenesses of other convent and brought there a gracious experience they have got under your leadership.

"You have led the Pühtica Convent for over forty years. You have educated many sisters, and the entire Russian Orthodox Church is cordially and sincerely grateful to you for this deed. Hierarchs, pastors, monks and nuns, and laymen of the Moscow Patriarchate admire you for this deed of your life and ministry.

"Prayers have been offered up in this holy convent for many decades. In the hard years, when the Estonia state has become independent, prayers and monastic deeds have not stopped. We believe that the Pühtica Convent, which had withstood the hardest years, would succumb to nothing in the future, that no storms would rock it and no political changes would affect its profound spirit of prayer for which this holy abode has been famed.

"Monasteries and convents are like islands of the other world in our restless and sinless world. When we live monastic abodes, we see secular fuss and human passions, while in monasteries and convents silent service to God is celebrated by monks and nuns in their hearts. Our sinless world is still alive thanks, maybe, to these prayers, and people have not yet exterminated one another in their bitterness because of these islands of the Divine truth and Divine love, the islands on which monks and nuns offer up their prayers for the peace in the whole world, for the welfare of God's holy Churches, for the quelling of hatred, for the ending of schisms, and for the triumph of God's truth in human hearts.

This cathedral, built by labours and care of benefactors is one hundred years old. It has been the heart of the holy Pühtica Convent for a century. A miraculous icon of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God is kept here, a bloodless sacrifice is offered here, and thousands of people partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ. All this is a pledge of the flourishing of Orthodoxy in Estonia. No blows, which the enemies of Orthodoxy could try to strike, would ever crush it, as the Orthodox Church is a Church of which Christ said: "the gates of Hades will not prevail against it (Mt 16:18).

I cordially and sincerely congratulate you all on this feast, and present the Cathedral with an icon of St. Elijah the Prophet of God venerated in the Pühtica Convent. May the prayers of this saint help, mother Hegumeness and sisters of the convent you on your way to salvation."

Hegumeness Varvara said:

"Your Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion!

May I cordially greet you and wholeheartedly than k you, their Graces archpastors, clergymen and dear gusts of the abode, pilgrims and all who have come to celebrate the centenary of the Cathedral of the Dormition. Today the Lord has granted us a great spiritual joy and consolation to receive the archpastors of the Russian Orthodox Church and pray at the solemn conciliar divine service officiating at which with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia was His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations.

"One hundred years have passed since the memorable day when Archbishop Agafangel of Riga and Mitava celebrated the Great Blessing of the church and its main altar dedicated to the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God. Since then several generations of believers have drawn spiritual strength here. We are spiritually born in the sacrament of baptism, we enter into communion with God while partaking of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, and we pray for the dead and find joy and consolation here. We cherish the church of God.

"While celebrating the jubilee, we prayed with deep gratitude and love for those who helped to build this church...

"His Holiness Patriarch Kirill and His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion are very attentive to those who love Pühtica Convent. Many are awarded in connection with the jubilee.

The Cathedral of the Dormition enters the second centenary of its history, and I would like to express my prayerful wish for God's grace to accompany and assist those who come to the convent seeking help and consolation. Once again I thank our dear archpastors, clergymen, high guests and pilgrims. I wish them good health, God' help in their work and many years of life.

Dear Metropolitan Hilarion, *Eis pollá éti, Despota!*"

Hegumeness Varvara presented Metropolitan Hilarion with a Pühtica icon of the Mother of God. Metropolitan Hilarion presented Patriarchal award to some clerics and laymen who has worked for the

good of the convent.

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