



Patriarch Theodore of Alexandria visits Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon

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On 6 September 2010, His Beatitude Pope and Patriarch Theodore II of Alexandria and All Africa visited the Church of "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God on Bolshaya Ordynka Str., Moscow. He was met by the rector, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations; Metropolitan Aleksandr of Astana and Kazakhstan; Metropolitan Serafim of Borjomi and Bakuriani (Georgian Orthodox Church), and clerics of the church. The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria was accompanied by Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrenaika, representative to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia; Bishop Aleksandr of Dmitrov; and archimandrite Meletios (Kumanis), skevophylax of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Upon entering the church, His Beatitude venerated the miraculous icon of the Mother of God, called the "Joy to All the Afflicted" and proceeded to the solium. Metropolitan Hilarion addressed him there, saying:

"Your beatitude! I wholeheartedly greet you at this holy church in which the miraculous icon of the Most Holy Mother of God, called "Joy to All the Afflicted," is kept. The church, to which, where people have been coming for many decades, was opened after World War II and was a most popular one in the period of persecution, when to be a Christian meant to perform a deed of confession.

"You have made a pilgrimage to the holy sites of Russia. Today you are returning to the region where fifty-four countries in the canonical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria are waiting for you and where you are performing your deed of confession, educating people and nourishing them with the bread of the Word of God.

"Your Beatitude! You concelebrated with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia yesterday. This concelebration vividly expressed conciliarity and unity that unite our ancient great Churches.

"I wish you, Your Beatitude, good health and strength from the Lord to perform your apostolic ministry.

"I cordially greet your representative, Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrenaika, our dear guest Metropolitan Aleksandr of Astana and Kazakhstan, our guest from the Georgian Orthodox Church Metropolitan Serafim of Borjomi and Bakuriani, and Bishop Aleksandr of Dmitrov, who accompanied you during your visit. On behalf of all the worshippers, I wish you good health and happy journey. I wish you to come

more often to rest your soul and muster your spiritual strength for your apostolic ministry."

The DECR Chairman presented Patriarch Theodore with a panagia as a token of his visit to the Church of "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon.

The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria said in his address:

"Your Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk!

Today, as I was entering this church, my heart was filled with reminiscences. I came to Russia for the first time twenty-five years ago as Exarch of Patriarch Nicholas to Patriarch Pimen, and this church was the first one I visited. I keep a photo with Archbishop Kiprian who warmly welcomed us. Your Eminence, this is the first Russian church, in which I prayed to the Mother of God beseeching her to help me in my new ministry of Exarch of the Patriarchate of Alexandria to the holy land of Russia.

"Your Eminence, I am leaving for Egypt today, where a hard work awaits me, as a new period in life begins in September. On October 6, all metropolitans of the Patriarchate of Alexandria will assemble at the annual Episcopal Council. All of them will present reports on their labours and their plans. We shall discuss what is to be done on the African continent – a continent of the future.

"Your Eminence Hilarion, I am happy to be lovingly invited to your church before my departure to Egypt. I would like to greet you whom we all love. I am very glad that you follow in the footsteps of your spiritual father, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, being his successor as chairman of the Department for External Church Relations. Yesterday I remembered with tears my spiritual father, Patriarch Parthenios. He was a great patriarch, who participated in the dialogue within world church family. Being his spiritual son, I used to ask him theological questions, and I am trying to follow in his footsteps like you are going the blessed way of your spiritual father, Patriarch Kirill.

"All the Patriarchs love you. Any time I converse with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, he tells me how he loves you and cherishes your theological thoughts. He tells me about your profound Orthodox thoughts and your delicate and precise feeling of music. Your Eminence, I am happy to be with you today and thank you for your love for our brother Metropolitan Athanasios. I also thank all the bishops present here. Your Eminence, any time I am traveling round different countries or staying in Africa, I shall think of you with great love and expect a new meeting with you. I remember you as a very young man worthily representing the Russian Church in foreign countries.

"All the Churches expect something of Metropolitan Hilarion, and not only the Orthodox, but Catholics and Protestants as well, as you have sound views and always proclaim the truth of Christ. It is evident

that you are "rightly administering" the word of Orthodoxy like St. Mark of Ephesus. We shall be happy to welcome you and your choir in Alexandria and Cairo at the celebration of the commemoration day of St. Mark. You will introduce the inhabitants to the glorious, great and holy Russian Church.

"I wish His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion many and blessed years. May St. Gregory the Theologian whom you love so much protect you. Many and blessed years to you."

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodore's visit to the church on Bolshaya Ordynka Street was the last item on the agenda of his visit to Russia.

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