



Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk celebrates at the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God on the commemoration day of St. Hilarion the New

[gallery]

A festive divine service was celebrated at the Moscow Church of "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka Street on the Name Day of Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were representative of the Patriarch of Alexandria to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Metropolitan Athanasios of Kyrenaika, Archbishop Ionafan of Tulchin and Bratslav, representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Bishop Anthony of Moravici, chairman of the Synodal Department for Ministry in Prisons Bishop Irinarkh of Krasnogorsk, chairman of the Synodal Committee for Cooperation with the Cossacks Bishop Kirill of Pavlovsky Posad, representatives of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia archimandrite Stephanos (Dispirakis), representative of the Orthodox Church in America to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia archimandrite Zacchaeus (Wood), chairman of the Synodal Department for Church-Society Relations archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, chairman of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Ministry and rector of St. Dimitry's Sisterhood Medical Nurses College archpriest Arkady Shatov, head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem archimandrite Isidor (Minayev), head of the Moscow Patriarchate Publishing House archpriest Vladimir Siloviev, vice-rector of the Church Postgraduate and Doctoral School archpriest Vladimir Shmaliy, deputy chairmen of the Moscow Patriarchate' Department for External Church Relations archpriest Nikolai Balashov and hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh), heads of the DECR secretariats and ordained DECR staff members, assistant to the DECR chairman protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin, professor of the Moscow Theological Academy protodeacon Andrei Kurayev, Ukrainian and Moldavian clergymen, and clerics of the church.

Archbishop Antonio Mennini, representative of the Holy See in the Russian Federation attended the festive divine service.

Praying at the service were representatives of the scientific, cultural, and business circles, monks and nuns, students of the St. Dimitry's Sisterhood Medical Nurses College, and parishioners.

The Moscow Synodal Choir conducted by the merited artist of Russia Aleksei Puzakov was singing at

the Divine Liturgy. Among the hymns there were sung those composed by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk and Archbishop Ionafan of Tulchin and Bratslav.

After the divine service, Archbishop Irinarkh of Krasnogorsk read out greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to Metropolitan Hilarion, which said in particular:

"Your Eminence!

"On the commemoration day of your Heavenly Patron, St. Hilarion the New, I wholeheartedly greet you and prayerfully wish you good health, peace, success, and joy in the Lord. The All-Bountiful Lord has granted you many talents, which you have placed completely at the ministry to His Holy Church, bringing witness to the world about the beauty of Orthodoxy by pervasive sermons, profound theological researches, and beautiful music.

"May Christ, the Giver of life, renew your physical and spiritual strength for the sake of your successful archpastoral ministry in all responsible fields of work entrusted to you by church authorities."

Archbishop Ionafan of Tulchin and Bratslav greeted Metropolitan Hilarion, saying in particular that His Eminence is known not only as an eminent theologian, but also as a zealous minister of the Mysteries of Christ.

Hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh) greeted the rector of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God on behalf of clergymen and laymen, saying in particular that it was a great joy to share in the celebration to St. Hilarion the New. "We have seen a lot of changes in parish life under your leadership, for instance, the Moscow Synodal Choir is singing in your church. The choir is known not only in Moscow, but in the entire world, too." Fr. Philipp reminded the worshippers that the Primates of the Orthodox Churches of Constantinople and of the Czech Lands and Slovakia visited the Church of "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God for the first time in the history of the church. That allowed parishioners to see that Orthodoxy is universal.

Metropolitan Hilarion said in his address:

"Your Eminences, Your Graces, fellow archpastors, dear reverend fathers, brothers and sisters!

First of all I would like to thank His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia for his kind words addressed to me, for his care for our common church life, and for his confidence in me, as he appointed me chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, rector of this holy church, and rector of the Church Postgraduate and Doctoral School.

"Twenty-three years ago, I took my monastic vows with the name of Hilarion, hegumen of the Dalmatus Monastery that was founded in the 4th century and considered the major monastery of Constantinople. As its hegumen was called "Exarch of all monasteries," all hegumens enjoyed respect and were very influential people. St. Hilarion the New shown forth in the epoch in which the satanic forces, acting through the emperor and even through certain ministers of the Church, revolted against the veneration of holy icons. St. Hilarion courageously defended icons, squared up to the emperor, was exiled, imprisoned, beaten, humiliated, and tortured. He had shown forth as a confessor during the hard time of iconoclastic controversy. St. Theodore the Studite mentioned St. Hilarion the New several times in his exhortations, and addressed a letter to him.

"It so happened that I took my monastic vows on the commemoration day of this saint, and the archimandrite who tonsured me has chosen him as my heavenly patron also because St. Hilarion was tonsured when he was twenty. He abandoned this world and devoted his life to God. Every man called to monastic life by the Lord, trembles at the thought of this way of life that demands labours, exploits, temperance, and many virtues. We, people of the 20th and 21st centuries, are weak and lack these virtues. When we contemplate of the life of the saints, including those after whom we were named, we see the abyss between us, the sinners, and the confessors and zealots of the Orthodox faith. We understand that there is an abyss and that we are weak and feeble, but we should take the deeds of the saints as an example for imitation.

"We should remember that the challenges the Orthodox Church encounters nowadays are no less awful than those she encountered ten or thirteen centuries ago, when St. Hilarion lived. There are heretics today who encroach upon the Orthodox faith. They try to persuade people not to venerate holy icons, as icons are 'idols;' they say that people do not need mediators in their communion with God and therefore do not need priests, bishops, church order, and holy icons, as certain Protestants and sectarians would say. Today the Church of Christ is being attacked by people who do not believe in God and do not want to lead a pious life, thinking that the Gospel moral commandments run contrary to common sense and the standards of modern life. There are people today who say that the Church has become obsolete, that it is a survival of times past, while future belongs to those who live by the laws of their mind, heart, and will, be it good or evil. We, people of the Church, whom the Lord has called to serve her, should fight for the Orthodox faith to the last ditch, following the example of the saints of old. We are called to love the Holy Church and bring this love to people around us not only by word, but by our way of life and our countenance, too.

"People would think sometimes that the major work for education had been done, as many go to church, the Church has revived, and the time has come to rest on our laurels. We fail to see that thousands and millions of people, even those who consider themselves Orthodox, are not always people of the Church who understand the meaning of their faith. They do not comprehend the meaning of divine services,

Christian morality, and the law of the Gospel. Who else, but we, ministers and laymen of the Holy Orthodox Church, should be apostles and preachers of the Gospel? Who else, but we, should bring witness about the beauty, strength, and truth of the Orthodox faith, which revives human souls and hearts and leads everyone to salvation? That is why we are to fulfill a great task of education, as in old times. There is a vast missionary field for all who wish to be workers in the field of Christ. We are happy to have our Patriarch as the leader of our Church, as he gives us an example of the zealous apostolic ministry and makes up our minds to become missionaries, not to tire or rest on our laurels, never forgetting that 'the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few' (Mt 9:37).

"I thank you all who have gathered in this church today to commemorate St. Hilarion the New, hegumen of the Dalmatus Monastery. I thank the representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches, those who arrived here from Ukraine, Moldova, and other countries. I thank clergymen of this church, the DECR staff members, and heads and staff members of other Synodal Departments, who have shared with us the joy of this feast and service at the Lord's communion table.

I wish all of us to be saved by God for many years so that the Most Holy Mother of God may comfort us in our sorrows and help us in our difficulties through her "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon, and so that the prayers of St. Hilarion the New and other great confessors of Orthodoxy may accompany us during our entire life."