



## Metropolitan Hilarion: ministry of mercy is ministry of love

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On 16 June 2010 the Church commemorates the translation of precious relics of the Holy and Right-Believing Prince Dimitry of Uglich. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations celebrated the Divine Liturgy on the dedication day at St. Dimitry's Church at the Pirogov First City Hospital. Clergymen and students of St. Dimitry's Sisterhood Medical Nurses College met the archpastor at the entrance to the church.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were Archpriest Arkady Shatov who is rector of the church, chairman of the Synodal Department for Charity and Social Ministry and rector of St. Dimitry's Sisterhood Medical Nurses College; Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, DECR deputy chairman; Archpriest Vladimir Vorobyev, rector of St. Tikhon's Orthodox Humanitarian University; and clerics of the church.

The Liturgy being over, Metropolitan Hilarion offered up a prayer to the Holy and Right-Believing Prince Dimitry.

Archpriest Arkady Shatov greeted the DECR chairman, thanked him for officiating at the Divine Liturgy on the dedication day of St. Dimitry's Church, and presented him with a pectoral image.

Metropolitan Hilarion said in his homily:

"Dear Reverend Father Arkady, dear concelebrants, dear brothers and sisters!

"It was a very moving moment to me to cross the threshold of the Church dedicated to the Holy and Right-Believing Prince Dimitry, where this saint of our Church is venerated, where a particle of his relics reposes, and where we offered up our prayers to this great intercessor for our souls.

"I cordially greet you, Father Arkady, on behalf of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who gave me his blessing to celebrate the Divine Liturgy today and to convey his primatial blessings to you and to your community, to all those who work and pray here and render help to our neighbours.

"I greet you, dear Father Arkady, on the threshold of your episcopal consecration. The Lord heeded to your humility with which you have served in this church and helped the needy for many years. You have revived this holy church and St. Dimitry's Sisterhood, and now the Lord is calling you to a higher

ministry. You will remain rector of this church and continue to lead the Sisterhood fulfilling a new responsibility of an archpastor whose task is to bring God's love to people multiplying it. You will have to give off more love to the neighbours, as a greater responsibility will be placed upon you.

"You are becoming a lamp put on the lampstand and giving light to all in the house (cf. Mt 5:15). I wish you help from our Lord Jesus Christ in carrying out your ministry entrusted to you by the decision of His Holiness the Patriarch and the Holy Synod as a light burden.

"Today we have heard the words from the Gospel according to John said by the Saviour on the eve of His death on the Cross: 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another' (Jn 13:34). We know these words; we know that the commandment of God to love one another is not new, as the Lord has given it to people *ad initium*. We hear it in the Old Testament, but the novelty of this commandment resounded by the Lord Jesus Christ is in that the Saviour has shown us by His life and death that not only natural human love is possible when we love our friends, relatives, and those who love us, but also sacrificial love commanded by God.

"What is the difference between them? First, the Lord calls us to love not only those who love us, but those who hate us, too. Christ calls us to love people not only in their beauty, but also in their ugliness, not only in their virtues, but also in their sins, not only in health and life, but in sickness and death, too. The Lord calls us to such love that would not weaken as people sin, stumble, commit evil deeds, or utter improper words. Our love should not weaken, as God's love to us does not weaken when we succumb to sin. The Lord loves every man irrespective of his righteousness or way of life. The Lord loves us all as His sons and daughters. God has prepared a place for all of us in His Heavenly Kingdom, as there are many dwelling places there (cf. Jn 14:2). It depends on us whether we are capable of heeding God's call to love and of keeping His new commandment to love one another.

"This commandment of Christ resounds with a particular strength here, where the nurses work, helping the sick, the exhausted, and the suffering. The ministry of mercy is the ministry of love! What other force can help people to love their neighbours and never abhor them, be they in sin, sickness, or difficult circumstances? We are called 'to bear one another's burdens' (Gal 6:2). This is that sacrificial love to which the Lord Jesus Christ calls us.

"Where from shall we draw strength to fulfill this new commandment? The Lord has not abandoned us and taught us to find the inner strength in ourselves, as our old human nature resists the new commandment to love one another.

"It is only from the Lord that we can draw strength to love our neighbours not only in righteousness, health, and life, but in sin, sickness, and death, too. When we come to church and partake of the Holy

Mysteries, when we become united with God through prayer, we draw strength necessary to fulfill the commandment to love and serve our neighbours, as God has willed. Therefore, it is natural and necessary to have the church of God as the core of a place where there are many sick people who need care and love. Let us not forget that we draw all gracious strength for our ministry from one source – our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Let us beseech Him to grant us strength and to fill our hearts with love that is God's gift so necessary in our ministry. Let us beseech the Holy and Right-Believing Prince Dimitry to help us carry our cross. May the Lord keep us all and the Sisterhood blessed by God for many good years through the prayers of St. Dimitry."

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Source: <https://mospat.ru/en/news/57090/>