



Metropolitan Hilarion: God has shown us that there is nothing impossible for man

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On Easter Monday, April 5, 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted in Moscow.

After the festive service, Metropolitan Hilarion delivered an archpastoral homily:

'No one has seen God at any time' (Jn. 1:18). We hear these words in the reading from the Gospel on the second day of Easter when we continue celebrating the Resurrection of Christ. By these words St. John the Theologian tells us that God by His nature is invisible and incomprehensible.

'No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him'. The apostle testifies that the true knowledge of God is possible only in Christ, as no one has ever seen the invisible God, God the Father. He is inscrutable and incomprehensible, and no human power, either that of the intellect or heart, can come to the knowledge of God and see Him as He is. When the Lord revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai, He said to him, 'No man shall see Me, and live...Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen' (Ex. 33:20-23). Moses, having ascended Mount Sinai, heard thunders and lightnings and then the glory of the Lord passed before him. He did not see the face of God but he saw the glory and trembled before it. He felt the might of God and his own powerlessness before this might. He confessed One True God and then told the people and the whole humanity about it.

This is how God revealed Himself to human beings in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament he did reveal to us His face. That was not the face of invisible God but that of the visible man Jesus Christ, God who became man, the One Who dwelt in the two natures, unmixed, unchanged, undivided, and inseparable, and revealed to humanity at the same time the Face of God and the face of man. That was the face of such a human being as every one of us should ideally be, that is, a human being entirely like God. That was the Person of God as human beings should know Him, that is, entirely close to the human being.

This is the mystery of Divine Incarnation that was revealed to humanity in the Person of Jesus Christ. He

was perfect God and perfect man. His human nature was not in any way inadequate or defective as compared to our human nature. There was nothing in His human nature that was in any way suppressed or belittled by His divine nature. The Lord Jesus Christ was the same human being as we all are. He got tired, cried and rejoiced; He slept and ate. It was only one thing in which He was not like us: He never committed a single sin, neither consciously or unconsciously, in action or thought, for His will was wholly united with the will of God. His nature was wholly committed to God and wholly united and linked with the nature of God. And even when He humanly seemed to enter into dialogue with the will of God, for instance when He appealed to God, saying, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me', His human will was instantly harmonized with the divine will, and He continued, 'Yet not as I will, but as you will' (Mt. 26:39).

Christ had two wills, human and divine, and two actions, human and divine. As holy fathers teach us, those were independent wills and independent actions, but His human will always submitted to the divine will and His human actions always submitted to divine action. In His Person there was no conflict between God and man but there was the ineffable union of divine and human natures, divine and human wills, divine and human actions, without mixture or confusion. It is this ineffable mystery of the union of God and man in one Person that we contemplate and feel especially strongly in Easter days when we glorify the Lord Who raised from the dead. We praise God Who lived a human life, a life difficult and humanly tragic as it seemed to end in a full defeat in the face of human evil. But this defeat was actually the greatest triumph of man over evil, over devil. It was the victory of human righteousness over human sinfulness, since the Lord by His feat of human life overcame human weakness. By His death He has overcome death and opened for the whole human race the gates to the Heavenly Kingdom.

Such are the mysteries of God incarnate. This is what Easter services and readings from the Gospel read in these days tell us: 'No one has ever seen God', and no one would have ever seen God and come to the knowledge of Him had He not deigned to become man and to reveal Himself to human beings through the human person of Jesus Christ. Let us praise God for it; let us thank Him for becoming so close to us, for not shunning our sinfulness, for overcoming the distance that separates us from Him. Let us thank Him for becoming like us so that we may become like Him, for revealing the face of God to us so that we, looking at Him and loving Him, may seek to become like Him, for showing us that there is nothing impossible for man. If man submits his will to the will of God, if he submits his action to the action of God, if in the Holy Communion he unites with God so that his body may become the body of God and his blood may become the Blood of God so that his entire nature may be transformed and changed into Divine Nature, then there will be no barrier between man and God, then there will be what holy fathers called deification, that is the union of man with God. And these things happened to many saints whose names we remember during divine services. These saints who walked in the steps of the Lord Jesus Christ along the path of righteousness showed by their lives that the mystery of deification is possible, that it is possible for man to unite with God in such a way that while remaining a

perfect human being, one can absolutely and completely unite with God in every thought and action.

Let us praise the risen Lord and ask Him to help us submit our will to the will of God, submit our actions and thoughts to Divine Providence. Let us ask the Lord to help us always remember His Resurrection and always bear in ourselves His Divine Image which will help us to become such as we must be.

Christ is Risen!

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