Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: the Lord has granted us life to abide in spiritual joy and glorify God by our life and doings

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On 28 March 2010, the feast of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for external church relations, celebrated Divine Liturgy at the Moscow Church of the 'Joy to All the Afflicted' Icon of the Mother of God.

Subdeacon G. Guaita, a DECR staff member, was elevated to the rank of deacon.

After the Liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers with his archpastoral homily:

> "Dear brothers and sisters! Today we celebrate the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem. This event, narrated in the Gospel, preceded the passions of the Lord and Saviour and his death on the Cross. The Lord entered Jerusalem in great glory. He was met by the adults and children with palm branches, crying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' This event is a most joyous Gospel event, and it is not fortuitous that today we have hears the words of St. Paul addressed to all of us: 'Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice!' The Church addresses these words to us not only on this feast day: this call concerns all our life. The Lord has brought us into this world not to grieve or pine away: the Lord has granted us life to abide in spiritual joy and glorify God by our life and doings.
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> "The Lord has come into this world so that we go to meet him and. Like the people of Israel, meet him with palm branches, saying: 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' The Lord calls us to this joy that does not come out from temporal pleasures and enjoyments, but from the Divine love that mysteriously and ineffable pours into our hearts any time we come to the church of God, attend the Divine Liturgy and partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ; any time we meet with Christ in prayer and reading of the Holy Scriptures; any time God's grace touches our hearts mysteriously like a breath of the wind. This is a special spiritual joy that is not revealed outwardly, but lives in human heart, helping people to overcome all misfortunes, temptations and trials.
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> "The Lord has brought us into this world to live in joy, and we ought to remember that Christians

should be able to rejoice and bring joy to the others. How can we teach faith to our children? Only through joy. Their education should be based on joy; we should teach faith in such a way so that it would not seem boring and joyless to them. Any introduction to religious principles, any mention of Christ should bring joy to our children.

"When the Lord was entering Jerusalem, children rejoiced seeing him. It was a natural response childlike response to his divine presence. We should educate our children from infancy to meet Christ, feel him, and partake of his Holy Mysteries. When they partake, even if they do not comprehend Holy Communion by their minds, let their hearts feel the divine joy, which the Lord gives us in this great Mystery.

"The feast of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem is a feast of joy and love. The Lord mounted a young ass and entered Jerusalem not as the Almighty Creator of the universe, but as the incarnate man who assumed human flesh and humbled himself, being obedient even to the death on the Cross. He entered Jerusalem not to take an earthly kingdom, but to suffer for human sins. Beginning from this evening, we shall be witnesses and participants of the events that happened on the last days of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Day by day and hour by hour we shall follow Christ to Bethany, where a woman with an alabaster jar of ointment poured it on his head and feet; we shall follow Christ to the upper room in Zion to the Last Supper with his disciples when he will tell them about love in the last hours of his earthly life and offer them his divine body and precious blood.

"We shall follow Christ along the way of his passions to the high priest Caiaphas and to the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. We shall see how the same crowd that today is crying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!', will shout to Pilate; "Let him be crucified! His blood be on us and our children" on instigation of the scribes and the Pharisees. We shall hear about all this on the days of Holy Week.

On Great Friday we shall stand before the Cross of the Lord, being awe-struck by human infirmity, insidiousness, and malice that have brought the Lord to the Cross, but at the same time admiring the ineffable mystery of Divine love and mercy, as the Lord had suffered superhuman passions voluntarily to save all of us. We shall be present at the last minutes of the Saviour's earthy life and hear him crying to his divine Father: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' We shall hear how the Lord breathed his last and how his soul descended into hell to preach the Gospel even there and to proclaim salvation so that the gates of the Heavenly Kingdom be opened to those in hell, too. At last, we shall hear the good tiding of the Resurrection of Christ and rejoice together with his disciples and the myrrhbearing women.

"The feast we celebrate today introduces us too these great events and reveals the mystery of Divine love and mercy. Today we meet the Lord who has come into this world to save all of us. We meet him as our Saviour, who has performed an exploit of love for our salvation.

"Let us ask the Lord to help us be his faithful disciples and have faithful heart so that we, exclaiming today, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!', would never crucify him by our sins and our sinful way of life. Let us ask the Lord to help us to live through the days of Holy Week and bring us to the joy of Resurrection, the joy that nobody could take away from us. Amen."

Attending the service were representatives of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta. On behalf of the Order, its Ambassador in Russia, Jeanfranco Facco Bonetti, and Marquise Immacolata del Borgo presented Metropolitan Hilarion with the particle of relics of Ss Peter and Paul, John the Baptist, holy martyr Dionysius the Areopagite, martyr Boniface, St. Alexis the Man of God, martyr Natalia, and other saints, and also the particles of the Cross of the Lord and of the rope with which he was flogged. These holy relics will repose in a special shrine at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/57514/