



## **Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: Repentance is not a self-censure, but a willingness to turn a new leaf**

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On 13 March 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for external church relations, currently in Lipetsk with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and at the invitation of Bishop Nikon of Lipetsk and Yelets, officiated at the All-Night Vigil at the Cathedral of the Nativity of Christ.

Concelebrating with Metropolitan Hilarion were Archbishop Ionafan of Tulchin and Bratslav, Bishop Nikon of Lipetsk and Yelets, DECR deputy chairman hegumen Philipp (Ryabykh), assistant to the DECR chairman Revd. Dimitry Ageyev, and clergymen of the Lipetsk diocese.

After the reading from the Gospel, the DECR chairman addressed the worshippers with archpastoral homily:

"We have just heard the well-known words, 'Open to me the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life...' Any time when we hear these words, we fall to thinking about repentance, about its meaning and about that what we need it for.

"Let us recall the purpose with which the Church has instituted Lent, these long six weeks preceding Holy Week and Pascha, during which we are called to repent in our sins. Some people think that they have no sins at all. Many live as if there is no notion of sin and wonder why they should repent and of what they should repent, saying, 'I live as all other people live, maybe not better, but at least not worse than this or that person; I do not kill, neither do I steal or commit crimes, what shall I repent of?' We, Orthodox Christians, know, that we always have something to repent of, because the Gospel commandment given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ, are so demanding that we often are unable to fulfill them.

"The Lord teaches us to love our enemies. Do we love those who we consider our enemies? The Lord teaches us to forgive those who wrong us. Do we act according to His word, are we not bearing grudge against a particular person who acted wrongly towards us? The Lord says: '...pray for those who persecute you' (Mt 5:44). Do we pray for those who hurt us? The Lord teaches us: if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also (cf. Mt 5:39). Are we not willing to render evil for evil – eye for eye,

tooth for tooth (cf. Ex 21:24) as the Jews of the olden times said in the Old Testament?

"We should repent of our life since we lead it not in the way that the Lord commanded us. The Saviour says: 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart' (Mt 5:27-28). Let us ask ourselves whether we are chaste? Let all men standing here asked themselves whether they have been faithful to their wives not only in behaviour, but also in thought, whether they looked at other women with lust? Let women ask themselves whether they were faithful to their husbands and fulfilled the teaching of the Lord and of St. Paul. Let them ask themselves whether they have educated their children with dignity, and have not they stood in the way of childbirth.

"We can well recall how many times we have not fulfilled the commandments of God! The Lord has given us much, but we, being careless and faint-hearted, and having little faith, refuse to fulfill His commandments, and we should repent of this.

"We should repent of that we have not kept God's commandments and have been not worthy of the Gospel, that voluntarily or involuntarily we have committed sins, which estranged us from the Kingdom of God. However, repentance is not a self-censure; repentance is a willingness to turn a new leaf. If before Lent we have not found inner strength to forgive those who wronged us, let us do it now. If we have not learned to love our enemies, let us try to pay a particular attention to it during Lent.

"Lent is the time when we can look at ourselves in sober earnest, reappraising our life and the values on which we base it, and to understand that our life would be meaningful only when we reorient it to Church and to the Gospel. Human life is a way to the Heavenly Kingdom. This Kingdom is being opened to us here on earth, when we come to church and partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ, when the heavens open to us, and we see the Lord with our spiritual eyes. However, these great goods given that the Lord gives to the believers, impose responsibility on them. The Saviour reminds us that we should be 'the light of world' and 'the salt of the earth' (Mt. 5:13-14) and show an example of Christian virtue. Let us repent during Lent, saying that we have not done good, though we could do good, that we committed evil, though we could avoid it. Let us beseech the Lord to grant us strength to go along the path of repentance and improvement of our life.

"It is never too late to repent and turn a new leaf. If the most inveterate sinner can begin to change for the better at any time as he wishes, if he turns to God for help.

"Dear brothers and sisters, I wish you gracious Lenten time, I wish you to come to Holy Week and the feast of the radiant Resurrection of Christ with dignity."

Metropolitan Hilarion presented a signed icon of the Mother of God in memory of his visit to the Cathedral church in Lipetsk.

After the divine service, the archpastors and their suite visited the Diocesan administration and prayed at the Church of St. Alexis of Moscow.

That same day in the evening, Metropolitan Hilarion departed for Moscow by train. He was seen off at the railway station by Bishop Nikon; secretary of the Lipetsk diocese archpriest Vasily Bilchuk; abbot of the Monastery of the Dormition of the Mother of God hegumen Mitrofan (Shkurin); and the head of the Gryazy district V. Roschupkin.

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