Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk: 'Holiness is a calling of every Christian'

Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, spoke on holiness and ways leading to it in his talk in the Church and the World TV broadcast on February 6, 2010.

His Eminence Hilarion drew the attention of viewers to the fact that 'the feat of holiness has existed in the Church always and everywhere. It is not limited to distant times in which glorified saints lived'.

According to the archpastor, there is a great difference between a good man and a saint. 'Holiness is an absolutely special calling. It is the degree of kindness, the degree of spiritual perfection and spiritual beauty which can serve as a standard for believers throughout centuries. The memory of those who did good and rendered services outlives them among their relatives and friends. Gradually this memory is obliterated and erased. But the situation is opposite in case of saints. St. Nicholas lived in the 4th century, but he is remembered, known and loved by millions around the world. It means that there is something special in the feat of holiness'.

Metropolitan Hilarion stressed that 'holiness as a calling has been the foundation of the Church's spiritual life throughout centuries'. There are various ways towards holiness: among those who become saints are both those who sought spiritual perfection in their lifetime and reached great heights in their journey and those who proved their love of God by their martyrdom.

Asked how the feat of holiness can be emulated in modern times, the archpastor suggested that one should verify one's actions by the God's will, giving as an example one's attitude to abortion: 'Every time when the moment comes to make this decision, a doubt can arise: now as it will be already a third child, are there enough means to support him and how people around will look at it – a thousand of various considerations. If the one consideration of faithfulness to Christ and the Divine teaching and understanding that if the Lord sends a child so be it outweighs others then it is already an emulation of the feat of saints. Because it is exactly the observance of God's commandment which can be followed even contrary to certain human considerations, even contrary to the so-called common sense'.

Addressing the example of St. Luka (Voino-Yasenetsky) who in his diary often reproached himself for sharp words and quick temper, Metropolitan Hilarion noted that such documents as diaries prove 'how saints worked to improve themselves', while ordinary people often 'are so blind spiritually that they do not see their own shortcomings': 'It is wrong to believe that saints did not have shortcomings, but they

struggled with them'.

Asked why the actions of some saints, especially 'God's fools', cannot be explained from the point of view of ordinary logic, the archpastor spoke about various ways leading Christians to holiness and explained how a prayer to 'God differs from an appeal to saints in prayer.

'I believe it is possible to pray to one Lord God alone, though an Orthodox Christian also prays to the Mother of God and saints. These are completely different types of prayer. Our relations with God are special, personal ones. We pray to God not because we want something from Him but because a Christian cannot do without communion with God... We can make various appeals to God but we need first of all God Himself. We need His presence in our life. We need communion with Him. We need to be heard by Him and to hear His response. This is the essence of prayer', the archpastor explained.

'Holiness is a calling of every Christian... We have become Christian to seek holiness. How far we will progress on this path depends on us and God's grace and the circumstances of our life. But we should go forward without looking back. Only in this way it is possible to attain holiness', Metropolitan Hilarion concluded.

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