



## **"The Church has been granted the Primate required by our troubled time." An interview of Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk to "Interfax-Religion"**

**– What changes in the Russian Orthodox Church since 1 February 2010 have been most obvious and impressive?**

– The election and enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill have, undoubtedly, been the most important events in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church last year. By the will of the Holy Spirit and through the election by the Local Council, the Church has been granted the Primate required by our troubled time, a time of impetuous changes and everyday challenges.

Today our Church is facing an unprecedented task to teach an active faith in Christ to people who have heard of Him but failed to listen to Him, to bring nominal Christians to the wholesome life in Christ. This task demands that the whole Church should exert maximum efforts, interpret creatively and sometimes even critically of what has been done or undone, and reflect fruitfully on what is to be done in future. A particular responsibility in this context is placed on those people who are entrusted with governing the Church. Therefore, a cost of a mistake, of an erroneous assessment of the situation, a wrong or irrational straining of efforts could be catastrophically high.

That is why one of the first actions of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill were changes in church governance in keeping with the demands of the time. New Synodal institutions were established, the frame of reference of the old ones was made more precise; an Intercouncil commission was set up, and the post-graduate and doctoral programme of the Church was launched; while reorganization of the diocesan and parish life is going on.

As to the tendencies, I believe that the church life would be developed in the light of the task that I mentioned. All of us should bring witness about Christ to the near and to the far, to those who do not know Him yet, and to those who might have forgotten Him.

**– What is the most important event of the first year of His Holiness Kirill's patriarchal ministry?**

– Among very important events of the last year I would cite a visit of His Holiness to Ukraine where he officiated at the conciliar prayer of hundreds of thousand people. This prayer has testified to the

adherence of our people to the great cause of preserving the unity of the Church commanded by God, the unity that transcends all earthly boundaries and divisions and unites people of different nationalities and political preferences in a single community of faith – the Orthodox nation.

Also very important was a visit of His Holiness the Patriarch to the ancient Constantinople. According to tradition, Patriarch visits all Local Orthodox Churches after his enthronement in accordance with the diptych. A series of these visits was opened by his visit to Constantinople. One can say that this visit has turned a new page in the relations between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow and also in the inter-Orthodox cooperation as a whole.

As a matter of fact, I can say a lot answering your question, for instance, about the voice of the Church resounding even more clearly in society, or traditional meetings of His Holiness with the youth in different cities, or further improvement of mutual understanding with state authorities in the countries in the canonical territory of the Moscow Patriarchate, a singled shift in the matter of teaching religion in Russian secular schools, and solution of the problems of pastoral care for servicemen. I believe that future church historians would face a difficult task of writing history of our time because of the extensive and versatile activities of the Primate of our Church.

**– Please share with us your personal impressions of direct contacts with Patriarch Kirill during last year, or your impression of his public addresses and sermons. What words of the Patriarch you remember better?**

– I recall the words of His Holiness said exactly a year ago, on the day of his enthronement: "There can be nothing private or personal in the life of the Patriarch: he and his entire life belong to God and the Church indivisibly; he takes the people of God to heart." I believe that all who are close to the Patriarch, myself including, can say that these were prophetic words implemented in his life today. It may be my most vivid impression of the everyday work with him.

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