



## Archbishop Hilarion: The Lord has immersed in the waters of the Jordan to fill them with His Divine grace

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On 18 January 2010, the Eve of the Epiphany, Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for external church relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka Street. The Great Blessing of the Waters was performed after the liturgy.

In his sermon the archpastors reminded the worshippers that there had been one feast in the Early Church commemorated at which were the Saviour's Coming to the world and the Baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ from John in the Jordan River. Two different feasts were established towards the 4th century, namely the Nativity of Christ and the Epiphany to commemorate the Baptism of our Lord and Saviour in waters of the Jordan. 'However, a close link has remained between the feasts,' Archbishop Hilarion underscored. "It is not fortuitous that the day between the Nativity of Christ and the Epiphany are called holy days and the themes in the divine services of both feasts have much in common, and even the structure of the celebration of the Nativity of Christ and the Epiphany is the same."

Archbishop Hilarion said, "On the feast of the Epiphany we recall the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Jordan to be immersed in its waters together with people. While people were immersed to be cleansed of their sins, the Lord Jesus Christ had no need in cleansing, as He was sinless. He immersed in the Jordan to sanctify the waters and to fill them with His Divine grace.

"The Church has established a custom to bless the water on the eve and on the feast day of the Epiphany. Water is blessed in commemoration of the event that happened in the Jordan; we heard about it in the Gospel reading today. It happens also to give us a great sacred thing – the blessed Epiphany water. We shall sprinkle our homes with it, we shall drink it, and it will be a source of our healing, and "a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." (Jn 4:14).

"The Lord has established different ways of receiving His Divine grace, and the blessed water is one of them. It is blessed on the feast of the Epiphany and on the eve of the feast. This water is really a source of healing. It is known that it does not go bad during the entire year, it can be added to our food and drink, we may drink it on an empty stomach, we can sprinkle our homes with it so that this holy water drives off all demons and all evil, so that God defends and helps us, so that God heals our souls and bodies and enlighten our mind by this holy water.

"On the feast of the Epiphany we glorify the Lord Jesus Christ Who sanctified the waters by His immersion in the Jordan.

"Today we celebrated Vespers and the Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Thirteen paroemias from the Old Testament were read during Vespers, and each of them told us about the effect of the water. The first of the readings narrated how God had created the heavens and the earth and how the Spirit of God had moved upon the face of the waters. Another reading recounted how God had led the people of Israel through the Red Sea, how the divided waters had stood on people's right and on their left. But when the Pharaoh's army had entered this "corridor" of the two walls of water, the waters had come down on the army and sunk it. We have heard many other stories from the Bible today; they all are perceived as a prototype of the event that we are celebrating today – the immersion of the Lord Jesus Christ in the waters of the Jordan. The Lord has descended in these waters to sink our sinful darkness in them and to grant us a source of healing. We only need to repent in our sins and put our trust in God.

The Lord wills to heal all people of physical and spiritual sickness. Let us pray to the Lord Who descended in the waters of the Jordan to sanctify our human nature, to deliver us from any sinful filth, and to grant us spiritual and physical health. Let us use the holy water that we shall receive today in church during the entire year to for sprinkling our homes and drinking. May this water be a source of our healing, a source gushing up to eternal life."

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