



## **Archbishop Hilarion: the ousting of religion from public sphere will end in tragedy**

On 9 January 2010, Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for external church relations, greeted TV viewers with the Nativity of Christ and answered questions in the "Church and the World" programme on the feast.

He expressed his confidence that the event in Bethlehem which happened over two thousand years ago "has unfolded human history and brought a new dimension into human life.

"The relations of man with God had been based on fear and human feebleness and helplessness. People were afraid of God and, therefore, tried to follow His commandments. There was an insurmountable distance between God and man."

"It was surmounted in the New Testament as new relations have been established between man and God. God Himself has surmounted the distance; He was incarnate and lived human life to be closer to us and making us feel easier with Him.

"That is why we are attracted to the Infant lying in the manger. He shows the greatest solidarity of God with human weakness and feebleness. The feast of the nativity of Christ is both solemn and majestic and touching and moving."

Archbishop Hilarion criticized any attempts to distort the real meaning of the feast. He believes that the ousting of Christian symbolism from the life of people in the west is a great tragedy of the present time.

He emphasized the shame and inadmissibility of calling the Nativity of Christ its proper name and reducing this event to an abstract "winter holiday."

"If Western countries continue to oust religion from public sphere into ghetto, it would lead to that what happened in the Soviet Union and Germany. Humanity cannot live without God, and if God is ousted, He would be replaced by monstrous and distorted ideologies that substitute lie for truth and cause terrible and innumerable suffering to people," Archbishop Hilarion said.