



## **Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk celebrates Divine Liturgy at the cathedral of the Russian Church Outside Russia in Geneva**

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Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, who are in Switzerland for a meeting of the Inter-Orthodox Preparatory Commission for a Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church, celebrated on December 13, 2009, the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Elevation of the Honorable and Life-giving Cross in Geneva.

He was assisted by Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, Archbishop Michael of Geneva and Western Europe, Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, DECR vice-chairman, Archpriest Mikhail Gundyayev, Moscow Patriarchate representative to the World Council of Churches, and Archpriest Pavel Tsvetkov, sacristan of the church.

During the service, the hierarchs prayed for the repose of His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia.

After the liturgy, a thanksgiving was said to St. Andrew the First-Called, followed by a prayer lifted up by Archbishop Hilarion at the relics of the Holy Martyrs, Grand Princess Elizabeth and Sister Varvara.

In his welcome address, Archbishop Michael thanked Archbishop Hilarion for common prayer, stressing that the DECR chairman came to Geneva to carry out the important service of consolidation of fraternal ties between Local Orthodox Churches. 'The conciliar service of Russian Orthodox hierarchs that has taken place today is a visible sign of the unity of our Local Church. Our common prayer is a source of spiritual power given by the Holy Spirit to all the faithful of the Church who live far from their motherland', His Eminence Michael said.

The DECR chairman in this turn reminded the congregation that that the Church commemorated St. Andrew the First-Called on that day, saying, 'the personality of St. Andrew, who became the first follower of the Saviour, is a prototype for all the successive disciples of Christ... who were followed by a great multitude of bishops and doctors of the Church. It is through their efforts that the Holy Church was built through centuries'.

One should not think he continued that only those who are vested with hierarchical power are bearers of witness to Christ and preachers of Christ in this world. 'Every Christian is called to become an apostle.

Each Christian is called to bear witness to Christ by his word and, more importantly, by his way of life and to be a tool of the Holy Spirit', he said.

In conclusion Archbishop Hilarion wished many happy returns of the day to Archpriest Nikolay Balashov, saying, 'In fulfilling the difficult task of a DECR vice-chairman, you set a vivid example of diligence and obedience to the Holy Church. You are always on alert and ready to come to one's aid. These qualities, combined with profound competence and erudition, make your ministry priceless and fruitful for the glory of the Holy Church', he said.

Next to address the congregation was Archbishop Mark. He noted that ministry outside the homeland was a special challenge for bearing Christian witness before the modern world and preserving inter-Orthodox peace. Pointing to the importance of inter-Orthodox meetings, His Eminence Mark expressed a profound joy at the fact that celebrating together, hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church could give an example of fraternal communion and love.

*DECR Communications Service*

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