



## Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk leads inauguration of Paris Orthodox Seminary

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Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk led the inauguration of the Paris Orthodox Seminary on 14 November 2009, the Day of Sts Cosmas and Damian the Unmercenary Physicians.

The festivities began with the Divine Liturgy celebrated by Archbishop Hilarion assisted by Archbishops Gabriel of Comana (Patriarchate of Constantinople), Innokenty of Korsun and Antony of Borispol and Bishops Ambrose of Gatchina and Michael of Geneva and Western Europe. Among the worshippers was Archbishop Feofan of Berlin.

After the liturgy, Archbishop Hilarion addressed the congregation, speaking about the meaning and significance of the theological school in the life of the Church. He said, 'Seminarian studies can become fruitful only if a student opens his heart for the light of the divine truth. The task of a seminarian is to be enlightened and transformed by the light of Christ Who is Himself Light born of Light. I wish that the Paris Orthodox Seminary may become a place where people will turn to the light of Christ's truth'.

The archbishop presented Rev. Nicholas-Jean Sed, the Cerf Publishing House executive director, with the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh, class III. The well-known French publisher has been decorated by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in recognition for the great services he rendered to the cause of publishing and disseminating works of modern Orthodox authors.

Archbishop Hilarion addressed special words of greetings and wishes of God's help to the rector of Paris Seminary, Hieromonk Alexander (Senyakov), who marked on that day the anniversary of his priesthood. Father Alexander was ordained by the Bishop of Vienna and Austria (now Archbishop of Volokolamsk) in 2003 at St. Nicholas's in Vienna.

Archbishop Antony of Borispol, who spoke next, noted in particular that 'the opening of an Orthodox seminary in the West at a time of what is sometimes referred to as 'an era of post-Christianity' was a miracle of the divine providence and a testimony to the fact that Christianity did live and develop in today's Europe. On behalf of Kiev Theological Academy, he presented the new seminary with books published by the academy to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revival of theological education in Kiev.

Bishop Ambrose of Gatchina, on his part, greeted the grand meeting on behalf of St. Petersburg theological schools and presented Father Alexander with an icon of Our Lady the Sign and books

published by the academy to mark its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Next on the celebration program was a conference, which was attended among others by Archbishop Andre Vingt-Trois of Paris, Bishop Michel Duboste of Evreux, Rev. Nicholas-Jean Sed, Rev. Claude Bati, president of the Protestant Federation of France, several high-ranking French officials and other honorary guests.

In the beginning of the conference, Archbishop Innokenty read out a message of greetings from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the occasion of the inauguration of the Paris Seminary.

Archbishop Andre Vingt-Trois of Paris expressed a great joy over the opening of an Orthodox seminary in Paris, which he described as a significant missionary project and a special event in the life of the French capital city.

Archbishop Hilarion made the key report, noting in particular that ‘the opening of an Orthodox seminary of the Moscow Patriarchate in Paris is an unprecedented event’. According to the archbishop, ‘the seminary is called among other things to become an important center of rapprochement between traditional Christian Churches in Europe’.

‘The primary task of Paris Seminary is to offer high-quality theological education. The seminary is also to become a link between the Russian Orthodox Church and Christians in France’, he said.

In conclusion of the inauguration, Archbishop Hilarion thanked the hierarchs, state officials and French public figures who came for the ceremony and expressed hope that His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, who was the initiator of the seminary, would continue patronizing it.

After the inauguration the DECR chairman gave an interview to the France 2 and France 3 TV networks.

*DECR Communication Service*

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