



## **Archbishop Hilarion: May the Mtsensk Icon of the Mother of God remind us of the Tragic Past of our Fatherland**

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On 8 November 2009, the Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk arrived at Mtsensk with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia to bring here the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God found by a German soldier in the ruined house in 1943 and returned to the Russian Orthodox Church this year.

The DECR Chairman was met at the city square by Archbishop Panteleimon of Orel and Livny, the chairman of the Orel regional Soviet of People's Deputies I. Mosyakin, the Mtsenk Mayor A. Fokin, clergymen of the Orel diocese, representatives of the public, and several thousands of pious laymen.

Archbishop Hilarion told those gathered at the square the miraculous history of the icon and its return to Russia.

He said to Archbishop Panteleimon, "I received the Mtsensk icon from the German Catholics, and today you are receiving it to return it to the place of its abiding. May this holy icon remind us of the tragic past of our Fatherland and be, at the same time, a source of solace, joy, and hope for a better tomorrow. Let us pray to the Mother of God beseeching Her to protect our homeland from any evil and lead us to the Heavenly Fatherland. Take this icon, Vladyka, and may it keep the flock entrusted to your care."

The ruling hierarch of the Orel diocese expressed his gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill who gave his blessing to the return of the icon to Mtsensk. "It is a momentous event for our land, he underscored. This is a call to the inhabitants of the city and the region to fulfill the will of God, to follow the Gospel commandments. This is a call to love, labour, unity, and to the revival of a new, strong Russia in which there would be no bitterness or disappointment."

A. Mosyakin pointed out at a special contribution of the Russian Orthodox Church to the building up of the Russian state. He believes that the grateful citizen of Mtsensk will always remember you, Archbishop Hilarion, and your mission of returning the icon to us."

Mtsensk Mayor A. Fokin thanked the authorities of the Russian Orthodox Church for the return of the icon on behalf of all city residents.

After the exchange of welcoming words, the archpastors and all those gathered at the square went on the procession of the cross to the Church of the Holy Trinity where the icon will be placed.

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