



## **Kazan Icon of the Mother of God taken out to Germany during the Great Patriotic War is returned to Mtsensk**

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On 8 November 2009, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God taken out by a German soldier to Germany sixty-six years ago was brought to Mtsensk, Orel region.

During the battle at Mtsensk in 1943, a German soldier named Josef Bertram found the icon of the Queen of Heaven. He kept it during his lifetime and bequeathed to his son to return it to Russia. Last August a delegation of a Benedictine monastery, where Josef Bertram's son lived, brought the holy icon to Moscow and delivered it to Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk at the Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" Icon, where it was venerated for several weeks.

In the evening of November 7, the parishioners bid farewell to the icon. Archbishop Hilarion officiated at the Vigil service in concelebration with the parish clergy and the ordained staff members of the Department for External Church Relations.

Archbishop Hilarion addressed his archpastoral words to the worshippers. Reminding them of the history of the icon's return, he said further, " His Holiness Patriarch Kirill gave his blessing to bring the icon to where it was founded – to the city of Mtsensk, Orel region. We shall venerate the icon now, and tomorrow I shall give it to Archbishop Panteleimon of Orel and Livny. Let us pray to the Most Holy Mother of God, beseeching Her to be our Heavenly Intercessor and for the safely return of the miraculously found holy icon to Mtsensk."

The Kazan Icon of the Mother of God was carried out from the church in a solemn procession and met on the next day in Mtsensk by Archbishop Panteleimon of Orel and Livny, clergymen of the diocese, leaders of the region and the city, and thousands of believers.

Archbishop Hilarion said that the icon would remind people of the Great Patriotic War and of those who died during those dreadful years, and that at the same time it would be a source of solace and joy for believers.

Archbishop Panteleimon called the return of the icon of the Heavenly Queen to homeland a momentous event for Mtsensk and the entire Orel land.

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