



Archbishop Hilarion lectures at St. Petersburg Theological Academy

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Archbishop Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations and rector of the Sts Cyril and Methodius Church Graduate and Doctorate School, gave lectures at St. Petersburg Theological Seminary and Academy, on 13 October 2009.

In the beginning of the meeting which took place at the Academy's assembly hall, His Eminence Hilarion was welcomed by the rector of the theological schools, Bishop Ambrose of Gatchina.

Archbishop Hilarion devoted his first lecture to the meaning of priesthood and the importance of spiritual and intellectual preparation for it. 'The priestly vocation lies first of all in the love of the sanctuary and the liturgy. If a man has no such love, if the sanctuary does not attract him and the Orthodox liturgy seems to him to be long or boring, it means he has no vocation to ministry', the archpastor said.

He emphasized that it was the ministry of presiding at the altar and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy that is the core of priesthood, adding, 'All other functions of a priest – and these are so diverse today as to include preaching and mission, not to mention requested services and visits to the sick and the dying as well as spiritual guidance – all of them stem from the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. It is the spiritual pivot around which the life of a priest should be built'.

A certain barometer showing whether a man has a priestly vocation is his attitude to the liturgy and this attitude is fully revealed outside the sanctuary, when he is still a lay person, the archbishop assured the audience.

Speaking about the theological training of future pastors, His Eminence Hilarion stressed that it was important for a student to work on his own with original sources and read the works of holy fathers rather than limit himself to what can be derived from textbooks.

It concerns not only the intellectual but also spiritual life of a man, he continued, underlining that one cannot grow spiritually if one passively takes in what comes from outside: 'One cannot develop in oneself an inner pivot, which is necessary for one to become a true pastor, if one's studies are restricted to memorizing particular data, dates, names and historical facts. Only if a student learns to think and come to his own conclusions, if he learns to think creatively, to look at life creatively, he will benefit from his studies. That is why, one's self-preparation, as we call it, and looking beyond the curricula are so

important in one's preparations for ordination and studies'.

In his second lecture, the archbishops spoke about the work of the department for external church relations and the tasks facing the Russian Orthodox Church in its external work today.

Addressing the time when DECR was established, he noted, 'The department for external church relations was founded in 1946, at the post-war time when the Church began coming out of a period of severe persecution, coming out of isolation. Those years saw the restoration of the Theological Schools and the opening of previously closed monasteries. It was a period of a certain revival of church life, even if this revival was very limited and subjected to a strict control of the state. Among various aspects of that church regeneration was the extension, and actually resumption after a long interval, of the Church's international activity. The Church came to be represented on the international arena as a participant both in the ecumenical movement and inter-Christian relations and in various peace initiatives. For our Church, it was necessary for many reasons, in the first place because this involvement gave her an opportunity to be represented on the international arena, which meant to be protected to some extent against persecution within the country'.

Archbishop Hilarion also spoke about the archpastors who headed DECR at different times, dwelling in particular on the work of Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) who, according to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, advocated at those difficult times the right of people to be the faithful of the Church while being full-fledged members of society.

His Eminence highlighted the work of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, now His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, in his former capacity of chairman of the department. 'Under Metropolitan Kirill, DECR became a sort of brain center of the Russian Orthodox Church. It was engaged not only in external political activity, but also fulfilled various functions with regard to church-state relations in Russia and in the post-Soviet space', he noted.

He also explained to the audience the various aspects of the DECR work in the present situation.

The lectures were attended by the students and faculty of St. Petersburg Theological Academy. After each lecture, Archbishop Hilarion answered numerous questions.

In conclusion of the meeting, Honoured Prof. Archpriest Vasily Stoikov, SPTA senior pro-rector, and A. Gorozhankin, assistant pro-rector for research, thanked Archbishop Hilarion for his lectures on behalf of the Schools.

