



## **Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates on commemoration day of St. Varlaam of Khutyn at the church of 'Joy to All the Afflicted' icon of the Mother of God**



On 19<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the commemoration day of St. Varlaam of Khutyn and of the holy martyr Konstantin Lyubomudrov, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the church 'Joy to All the Afflicted' icon of the Mother of God on Bolshaya Ordynka by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations. Clergymen of the church assisted the archpastor.

During the Prayer of Fervent Supplication, petitions were voiced over the threat of the spreading coronavirus infection.

Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up the prayer recited at a time of the spread of a pernicious epidemic.

Glorification was said before the icons of St. Varlaam and the holy martyr Konstantin.

After the Liturgy, His Eminence Hilarion addressed the worshippers with an archpastoral homily:

“Dear reverend fathers, brothers and sisters, I congratulate you on the commemoration day of the patrons of our church – St. Varlaam of Khutyn, a Novgorod miracle-worker, and the holy martyr Konstantin, a Moscow presbyter.

St. Varlaam of Khutyn has always been a patron of this church. Even before the ‘Joy to All the Afflicted’ miracle-working icon of the Mother of God was brought here, a church dedicated to St. Varlaam of Khutyn had been standing at this place. This church is now a side-altar. The icon of St. Varlaam reminds us of this Novgorod miracle-worker who had been venerated throughout the great Rus’ and in the capital city of Moscow. This church was built in his honour, rebuilt many times and extended; new side-altars were added, including the one in honour of the ‘Joy to All the Afflicted’ icon. The main side-altar in honour of the Transfiguration was added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

We pray to St. Varlaam, a healer and miracle-worker who possessed spiritual gifts, including a gift of exorcising, and ask him –to shield us from evil and infirmity by his prayers and intercessions and assist us on our commanded by the Lord way to the Kingdom of Heaven.

In our church we commemorate St. Varlaam and the holy martyr Konstantin Lyubomudrov on the same day. Fr. Konstantin used to be rector of this church in the 1920s when the Church was persecuted by the godless powers. The Civil war was followed by a hard time when people were starving without means for survival. At that time priests had to celebrate at the unheated churches which were closing down one by one. The godless powers infringed upon this holy church to deprive the faithful of coming and praying here.

In the early 1930s Fr. Konstantin was exiled from Moscow to Kazakhstan, and when he came back he could not celebrate here because the church had been closed down. Fr. Konstantin spent most of his time roaming around Moscow and its vicinity seeking shelter, which was sometimes given to him by the faithful, and caring for his spiritual sons and daughters.

Life was becoming even harder. In 1937 the NKVD Order No.00447 was issued with instructions on repressions and with listing the categories of social classes against which to use them. Quotas were set for each region of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and Kazakhstan so that the number of the repressed or executed could not be less than set.

That means that the death-squads had to find people for execution very quickly for keeping the quota.

Quota set for Moscow and Moscow region was five hundred thousand to execute, and thirty hundred thousand to repress in other ways. The operation had to be finished in four-month term, but had lasted longer because the godless powers had felt satisfied with mass killing of people or using them as cheap labour at the construction of the Berezniki chemical combine, the White Sea-Baltic Canal, or other top-priority projects.

The initial quotas had been exceeded many times over. Not five or ten thousand, but hundreds of thousands had been executed in Moscow and Moscow region. Executions continued throughout the country as the punitive bodies were hastening to satisfy the unfettered greed of those who had launched outrageous crimes against their own people.

Certainly, the first persecutions were directed against the so called anti-soviet elements, clergy and laity including. Fr. Konstantin fell victim in 1937. In the early 1930s clergymen were brought to court, sentenced and even had lawyers, but in 1937 everything was done in no time. Clergymen were arrested and interrogated just once, because everything was thought over well in advance: evidence collected, reports completed, and a clergyman can either put his name on the report or not. If he refused, someone else would have done it. A clergyman was sentenced by the NKVD troika and executed by shooting on the next day.

Our holy martyr Konstantin Lyubomudrov was executed. His fault before the Soviet authorities lies in his being a pastor of the Church, who believed in God, cared for his spiritual sons and daughter and served people even when he could not celebrate in church because it had been closed down. He was arrested and put into Butyrka prison, interrogated and executed at the Butovo firing range and on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1937, the commemoration day of St. Varlaam of Khutyn.

Some one hundred and fifty persons were killed on the same day, including many other new martyrs and confessors of the Russian Church. We commemorate them on this day as well.

Today we glorify our heavenly patrons – St. Varlaam who had lived long time ago and the holy martyr Konstantin who lived more recently. We pray to both of them, asking them to assist us in our life, keep from infirmities and sorrows, and in case they befall us to help endure them with genuine Christian meekness and trust in God's will as St. Varlaam and Fr Konstantin had done.

Let us pray to St. Varlaam of Khutyn and the holy martyr Konstantin Lyubomudrov, beseeching them to guard us, our city and our Fatherland from calamities, sorrows and the pestilent epidemic. And – what is most important – to keep the Orthodox faith in our people so that they never be tempted by false ideals

and that the sorrowful period in our history with thousands and millions of victims can never recur.

May our holy fathers, new martyrs and confessors of the land of Russia pray for our Church, our Fatherland and all of us.

I congratulate all of you on the patronal feast of this holy church.

Take care of yourselves, take care of those close to you, and may the Lord preserve all of us!”

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