Metropolitan Hilarion: The Holy Spirit acts above the human consciousness



On June 20th, 2021, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity (Pentecost), Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Moscow church of "Joy to All the Afflicted" icon of the Mother of God on Bolshaya Ordynka street. Clergymen of the church assisted the archpastor.

During the Litany of Fervent Supplication, petitions were offered up for deliverance of the coronavirus infection.

After the Litany, Metropolitan Hilarion lifted up a prayer recited at the time of the spread of baneful pestilence.

After the end of the Liturgy, kneeling prayers were said.

Afterwards, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the congregation with an archpastoral word:

“In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

I congratulate all of you dear fathers, brothers and sisters, on the Day of the Holy Trinity - the feast of Holy Pentecost!

Today, we remember the event that happened on the 50th day after the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, when all the disciples of the Savior gathered together. There were many people around them, they were preaching, and suddenly people saw how tongues of fire descended on each of the apostles. And each of the hundreds of people who came to Jerusalem for the celebration heard the apostles speaking in his own language. This miracle marked the beginning of the apostolic preaching, which embraced the entire universe, all nations, and transformed the whole world.

To understand the significance of this event, we must remember that the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ were not learned men with a high theological education. These were simple Galilean fishermen who, apparently, did not even know how to read and write. They were close to the Lord Jesus Christ during the short time of His public ministry, saw His miracles, heard His parables, but understood little of what was happening.

When Christ was crucified, the disciples scattered in fear, because they probably thought that this whole story was over and now they should go back to their fishing tackle. Then, when the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected, at least some of them were confused and could not believe that before them was standing the same Christ whom they had known for a long time. As the Gospel tells us, when the Lord called the apostles on the mountain in Galilee, some worshiped Him, while others doubted.

In order to turn these weak people, illiterate fishermen into apostles, capable of preaching the word of God and boldly testifying of the Resurrection of Christ, special power was required, which the Lord Jesus Christ promised to His disciples at the Last Supper, saying: “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning"(John 15: 26-27. "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."(John 16:13-15).

On the holy day of Pentecost, what the Savior promised was accomplished: He sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles. The Holy Spirit, as we know from the dogmatic teaching of the Church, is not just some kind of power or energy of God, but God Himself, one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity; God, who is given to those who believe in Him and seek Him, who fills their lives with His life-giving presence, transforms their entire human nature.

This is exactly what happened then - on the day of Holy Pentecost. But the significance of this holiday lies not only in the fact that we remember an important event in the life of the early Christian Church, which some theologians call the birthday of the Church. The significance of this event lies in the fact that it continues to this day. Holy Pentecost, which began then, has not been interrupted to this day: the action of the Holy Spirit, which was transmitted to the apostles, now continues in the life of the Church. The apostles and their successors departed into another world, many generations of people had been born and died, but the apostolic succession on earth is not interrupted, and the work of the Holy Spirit continues in the Church created by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let no one think and say that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was abundant only in early Christian times, and then became scarce. The Holy Spirit reveals Himself in different forms and in different actions. In the early Christian Church He acted in one way, but in our time He acts in a different way. Back then tongues of fire descended on the apostles, and now the grace of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of ordination descends on their successors. Back then the apostles spoke in different languages, or at least people heard them speaking in different languages, and today the successors of the apostles preach the sacred Gospel in all languages of the world. Each person, if he wishes, can hear this good news in his own language.

We know from history that the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples in the Aramaic language, and read the Holy Scriptures in the Hebrew language. But already the first generation of Christians, who were Jews by birth, including the apostles we are talking about today, decided to convey to the nations the message of Christ's Resurrection, His teaching and His death, not in Hebrew, but in Greek. At that time, Greek was the main language of the Roman Empire. The Gospels were written in Greek. The Apostle Paul, who said about himself that he was a Hebrew of Hebrews, wrote his epistles in Greek. He decided to write his epistles in Greek so that as many people as possible, including former pagans, could have the faith in the Crucified and Risen Christ.

When the successors of the apostles spread the Christian faith, the conversion of every nation to Christ began with the fact that this message, transmitted in the Greek language, was already translated into the languages of those nations to whom the Holy Gospel was preached.

Saint Cyril and Methodius translated the Holy Scriptures and liturgical books for our Slavic ancestors so

that our ancestors could hear the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ in their native dialect.

Then, already in a relatively recent time, in the 19th century, when people did not understand the Slavic language so well, the Church undertook the work of translating the Holy Scriptures into Russian. In this synodal translation we read the Holy Scriptures today.

However, the action of the Holy Spirit is carried out regardless of what language does a person speak. The Holy Spirit works above the human language and human consciousness, performing miracles, of which we have become witnesses and participants in the Church of Christ.

When we gather for the Eucharist, we offer God bread, baked with human hands, and wine that is the fruit of human labor. But through the action of the Holy Spirit, through the prayer of the bishop, priests, deacons and all believers participating in the service, bread and wine are always transformed, changed and transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit, we, taking within ourselves the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, are spiritually renewed and revived, for God Himself enters our flesh: His Blood begins to flow in our veins, and His Body becomes our flesh. We are united with the Lord Jesus Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit, not only spiritually, but also physically, with all of our human nature.

When a bishop performs the sacrament of ordination, making a layman a reader and then a subdeacon, and then ordaining him as a deacon - each transfer of this person from one degree to another occurs by the action of the Holy Spirit. The bishop is the same earthly person as all ordinary people. But laying his hands on the henchman, he transfers to him not his strength, art or skill, but the grace of the Holy Spirit. When the deacon is elevated to the priestly rank, the bishop again lays hands on him, and again the Divine grace “which always heals that which is infirm and completes that which is lacking,” descends on this person and puts him forward to a new service. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, he becomes able to perform a ministry that surpasses his human strength.

And if the Church elects this or that clergyman for episcopal service, then several bishops gather here to glorify the Lord conciliarly, together to call on the Holy Spirit, so that through this invocation the newly elected bishop would receive special Apostolic grace. This grace, by direct succession from the Lord Jesus Christ and His holy apostles, is passed down from generation to generation and rests on the present successors of the apostles, and will rest on all their successors until the end of time.

The bishop has the opportunity to see the miracle of the descent of the Holy Spirit, which takes place almost daily. The Holy Spirit transforms bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, turns illiterate fishermen into bold apostles of the Savior, makes weak people able to be the successors of the apostles and preach the word of God, gives them strength to testify about Christ, if necessary, even to death.

Let us remember our new martyrs and confessors, who found themselves in the most difficult conditions of persecution and did not flinch, but went to the cross, to death, in order to testify their faithfulness to Christ. What helped them? Or rather, Who helped them? Of course, the Holy Spirit helped them overcome the hardest trials, gain spiritual and physical strength in themselves amid the most severe persecutions and remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ to the end.

The feast of Holy Pentecost testifies to the fact that the work that was begun on earth by the Lord Jesus Christ – continues. And despite all the obstacles that arise, it continues very successfully, for the Holy Spirit helps those who preach the Gospel in every generation of Christians.

On this day of Holy Pentecost, let us turn to the Lord to send us the Holy Spirit, so that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, may come and dwell in us, cleanse us from all filthiness and save our souls. Amen.

Happy Feast to all of you! God bless you all! "

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