Metropolitan Hilarion: Many things in a person's life depend on faith



On August 29th, 2021, the 10th Week after Pentecost, after the Feast of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, the Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, 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.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the Archpastor addressed the audience with the following sermon:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

In today's Gospel reading, we have heard how the Lord Jesus Christ cast out a demon fr om a demon-

possessed boy. When the Disciples asked: "Why could we not cast him out?" (Matthew 17.19), the Son of God replied: "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Mt 17:20).

These words often echo in our hearts, and we ask ourselves: how is it possible for a person to have such faith that would move mountains? And why is it that when we pray and ask for something, we don't get it? Is it because we have a weak faith? Or is it because God doesn't want to give us what we ask for? Or for some other reason?

If a person has a strong faith, then the most important prayer that he says is the prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ taught us: Thy will be done. Christ Himself revealed just such an image of prayer when, before His suffering on the cross, knowing that on that night He would be put to death, He prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: "My Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matthew 26: 39). These were the words of a Man who was afraid of death, as all earthly people are afraid of it, but at the same time in this prayer the Son of God entrusted Himself to God the Father: "Not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22: 41). It was the prayer of a Person Who has completely united His whole will with the will of the Heavenly Father. It was the prayer of the God-Man Who came to save people from all sin. And this prayer teaches us how we should pray and what kind of faith we are called to have.

The Lord calls us to pray for whatever we want. He says, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For wh ere two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18: 19-20).

We pray during the Divine Liturgy and other services, and we know that this prayer reaches God. Even if our specific requests are not always fulfilled by the Lord, whether because God does not want to fulfil them or because our faith is weak.

But the Lord reminds us through the incident, which we heard about in today’s Gospel reading, that many things in a person's life depend on faith. And even faith similar to a mustard seed, that is, faith, seemingly small and weak, can work wonders if a person trusts not in their own strength, but in God.

Today’s Gospel reading reminds us that demons can be very close to us and are ready to take possession of us if we open the doors for them. And a reliable defense against demonic encroachments is faith, as well as prayer and fasting. This is what the Lord said to His disciples: "But this generation is cast out only by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17: 21).

We have just completed the Dormition Fast, but we do not stop observing the fast days established by

the Church. The Lord calls us to pray constantly and the Apostle Paul reminds us to pray without ceasing.

The three weapons we have – faith, prayer,and fasting - defeat the demons around us, of which there are many. They may not be as visible as they were in ancient times, when demons possessed people, when possessed people walked around the cities, shouting in different voices. Now the demons have learned to act differently. They influence a person through the mass media, through the Internet, through various soul-corrupting propaganda, through the fact that sin is legalized, raised to the norm, and through much more.

These demonic attempts are especially dangerous for young people who are not yet strong in the faith. That is why we always pray especially hard for children and young people. That is why the Church should make special efforts to ensure that children and young people do not stray from God, do not succumb to the influence of demonic forces, and maintain a strong faith that will be useful to them for the rest of their lives until a very old age.

Today, on the day that precedes the beginning of the school year, we will offer up prayers that the Lord would strengthen our children and our youth in their teaching. But most importantly, we will ask the Lord to strengthen them in their faith, because faith is the rock that will help every child and every young person to pass through this life without being defiled and without succumbing to the influence of demons. And if one happens to fall under this influence, then faith will always return them to God and to the Church. Amen."

After the sermon Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk performed a prayer service for the beginning of the academic year for the youth.

DECR Communication Service

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/87928/