



Metropolitan Hilarion: The rock, on which St Seraphim of Sarov used to pray, became the ladder to Heaven for him and for many other people

On 15 January 2012, the commemoration day of St Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Moscow Church of the "Joy to All the Afflicted" icon of the Mother of God in Bolshaya Ordynka.

Concelebrating were Metropolitan Vassileios of Elasson (Church of Greece); Bishop George of Siemiatycze (Church of Poland); hegumen Mitrofan (Shkurin); archimandrite Anthony (Avramidis) of the Church of Greece; hieromonk Maksim of the Mt. Athos cell of the Annunciation; Rev. Dmitry Ageev, assistant to the DECR chairman, the ordained DECR staff members, and clerics of the Church.

After the service, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed the worshippers. He congratulated all those present on the commemoration day of St Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov: "St Seraphim lived at the time of atheistic and secular delusions growing stronger and stronger, when our intelligentsia drifted further and further apart from God, when the culture of upper classes was determined not by native traditions and standards based on spiritual values, but by foreign standards based on secular values. Aristocracy and intelligentsia drifted further and further apart from the Church. Common people, of course, still followed church traditions, but the spirit of nihilism and skepticism was corroding the Russian society. And at that time God showed to His Church His great saint – Seraphim of Sarov, who spent many years in dense forest, unknown, praying. He spent thousand days and nights praying to God standing on bended knees on a rock. This rock became the ladder to Heaven for him and for many other people. God willing, people started to come to St Seraphim attracted by his exceptional loving kindness and by God's light which filled the man who had spent many years praying, repenting and crying over his sins and sins of the whole world.

In the early 1990s the holy relics of St Seraphim of Sarov were regarded as lost, but a miracle happened! Imagine: they were found at such place as the Leningrad Museum of Atheism. The holy relics were brought to the Diveyevo Convent founded by St Seraphim, and this abode once again became the centre of pilgrimage for tens and hundreds of thousands of people from all over Russia and from all over the world".

Metropolitan Hilarion called upon the worshippers to pray to our God-bearing Father Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov for showing us the way to Heaven, for helping us to be good Christians, follow God's commandments and church canons and to the best of our ability ascend in spiritual life "from strength to strength" succeeding in virtues and prayer.

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