



Metropolitan Hilarion: ‘We hold dear St. Seraphim of Sarov’s spirit of joy which the modern man is lacking so much’

On August 1, 2010, the Day of the Founding of St. Seraphim of Sarov’s Relics, Metropolitan Hilarion, head of the Moscow Patriarchate’s department for external church relations, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted in Bolshaya Ordynka Street in Moscow.

The Synodal Choir conducted by Russia’s Honoured Artist A. Puzakov sang *The Divine Liturgy* composed by Metropolitan Hilarion in 2006.

After the service His Eminence Hilarion delivered a sermon:

“Dear Brothers and Sisters, this Sunday we celebrate the memory of the great miracle-worker of our land, St. Seraphim of Sarov. Today our Patriarch arrives in the Nizhniy Novgorod diocese to celebrate and to visit places associated with the life and feat of the saint.

“Why do the Russian people love St. Seraphim so much? Why has this saint who showed forth in the recent times proved so dear to our hearts? – For many reason. St. Seraphim was not, as they say today, a public figure. He was not a man who speaks from the pulpit, defending holy Orthodoxy in struggle against heresies. He has not glorified himself by martyrdom. He retired to a desert in order to live in obscurity but he achieved such spiritual height and perfection that the Lord Himself placed him up to the candlestick of all Russia. And this ordinary man, who sought only to live with God, became a guide for millions of people.

“St. Seraphim lived in solitude for a long time. For thousands days and nights he stood on a stone in kneeling prayers to God. He lived in wild woods, praying to the Lord day and night. What fruits could such a life bring? What could the man who rejected all the joys of life bring out from this long seclusion? He could come out of it gloomy, concentrated only on himself and his own sins, indifferent to other people’s life.

“But all that we know about St. Seraphim speaks of quite a different result of his long fasting feat. He came out from his seclusion spiritually enlightened, joyful, capable of not only talking but also listening to other people. It was not accidental that he welcomed every one who came to him, be it during Easter or Lent, with words, ‘Christ is risen, my dear!’ These words manifested the spiritual enlightenment and joy which became a natural fruit of his long fasting and prayer. He was very glad to see every one who came to him and conveyed this joy to his visitors who came in distress because they wanted to share their problems with him and to receive spiritual consolation from him. Among his visitors were also well-off people. They seemed to have everything to enjoy life but there was no peace or joy in their life.

“The joy St. Seraphim gave to his visitors comes from God; it was not a consequence of temporal gains or achievements. It was an inner joy with which St. Seraphim illumined all who came to him. It was a fruit of a life in the Holy Spirit. This is why St. Seraphim said that the goal of life for a Christian is the seeking of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is present in one’s heart, all the fruits of the

Spirit which St. Paul referred to – *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Gal. 5:22-23) – are present in it. And the inner peace St. Seraphim emanated to those around him was also acquired through his inner feat and the work of the Holy Spirit.

“Once a certain man by name of Nikolay Motovilov came to St. Seraphim for instruction and spiritual consolation. During their talk, which took place in a winter snow-covered forest, St. Seraphim suddenly showed forth with the Divine Light, like the Lord Jesus Christ showed forth with the Divine Light on Mount Favor. They continued their talk in the warmth and fragrance, during which the saint told Motovilov that the true goal of one’s life is the seeking of the Holy Spirit. This action of the Holy Spirit was revealed to Motovilov during his talk with St. Seraphim.

“St. Seraphim of Sarov is a saint who is close to us in time but also close to us in the spirit of joy, which the modern man is lacking so much. Many of you go by metro. Look at people’s faces in a metro car and you will see no joy in them. You will see all kinds of expression – concern, restlessness, irritation but you will see no joy. Some would say: And what is there to be delighted with in subway? But go to a restaurant and look at the faces of those who sit there. Will you see many joyful and enlightened faces? No. Joy, enlightenment and authentic happiness come not from entertainments but from the awareness of what a person lives for. They come whenever a person in a hurry comes to understand that at the end of the day there is nothing to push on to because one cannot either bring closer or put off the moment of one’s move to eternity. He knows that all his life is under the patronage of the Divine Will and Providence. If a person lives with such thoughts and feelings, he will always have inner peace and joy, even if he is overcome by sad circumstances, temptations and trials. Then he will be able not only to keep this inner joy in himself but also to convey it to those around him.

“Everything is based on one’s observance of God’s commandment and participation in the life of the Church, which through prayer, divine sacraments and especially the holy Eucharist gives one all that is necessary for salvation and gives one abundantly the grace of the Holy Spirit. Let us ask the Lord that through the intercession of our venerable and God-bearing Father Seraphim He may give us inner peace and joy we need so much to perform our feat of life. Amen!”

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