

## **FAITH IS THE ASSURANCE OF THINGS HOPED FOR**

**By Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev**

**4th Sunday after Pentecost, the faith of the centurion**

**June 20, 2010, Moscow, Church of the Icon of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow"**

In the Gospel reading of today, we heard about the healing by our Savior of a centurion's servant in Capernaum. This man did not even request that Christ would come to his home: "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Mt. 8:8). And the Lord made a miracle according to the faith of the centurion.

The Gospel periodically mentions the significance of faith in the life of a person. Faith, as the apostle Paul says, "is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). When non-believers ask us: "How can you prove to us that God exists?" — we may not have rational evidence of arguments that would inevitably lead a person to faith. But we can say that God reveals Himself in many ways in our lives. We believe because we feel the presence of God: when we come to church, when we pray at the Divine Liturgy and when we receive Holy Communion. We believe because we experience the Providence of God in our personal lives, — this is the confidence in that which we cannot see with our physical eyes, about which the apostle Paul speaks.

It is exactly this faith which has helped the saints to perform miracles throughout the centuries. During times of persecution, it gave strength to confessors and martyrs to resolutely stand for Orthodoxy, even if it cost them their lives. It is exactly this faith which for centuries inspired the prophets, the apostles, the saints who were bishops — every one who labored for piety and taught the people the Divine truths and laws. Today as well it transfigures and sanctifies our lives.

Faith, according to the words of the apostle, is the assurance of things hoped for, because, although we know that eternal life awaits each of us, and we hope that the Lord, according to His inexpressible mercy will grant us entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven after we have passed into the next life, we already now, in this earthly life, experience the Kingdom of Heaven.

We experience the Kingdom of Heaven every time we come to the Divine Liturgy in order to receive Holy Communion, for through Holy Communion God Himself is united with us. He doesn't simply come to us, doesn't simply observe us, doesn't simply reveal His Divine will to us — He becomes a part of our spiritual and physical essence: He enters into our bodies. His Blood begins to flow through our veins and our entire human nature is renewed by His Divine grace.

This is what faith gives to us. Life without it is only an illusion of life. Many people who do not have faith just think that they are living life; it seems to them that the main purpose of life is to enjoy themselves with the transient pleasures of this life: today man enjoys himself, but tomorrow he suffers because he doesn't understand the true meaning of his own life.

A believer — this is a person who knows the purpose of his life. His life is defined by a spiritual orientation. The believer understands that it is necessary for a person not to live for himself, but for others, that in life it is necessary to accumulate the wealth that "neither moth nor rust consume" (Matt. 6:20), — the imperishable wealth which will accompany us into eternal life.

***Translated from the Russian by Archpriest Peter Olsen***