



## **Metropolitan Hilarion: Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus's decision to make the liturgical mention of the head of Ukrainian schismatics has provoked a negative reaction in the Church of Cyprus**

*On October 31, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, during the Church and the World talk show broadcast by Saturdays and Sundays by the Russia-24 news channel, answered questions from anchor Ekaterina Gracheva.*

**Gracheva:** Good day, here Ekaterina Gracheva with you. It is the time for 'The Church and the World' program in which we weekly question Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. I greet you, Your Eminence.

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** Good day, Ekaterina. Good day, dear brothers and sisters.

**Gracheva:** In France, there have been a whole series of attacks that have already been called terrorist attacks: three persons were killed in Nice. All this is a consequence of the fact that in France a Muslim beheaded a teacher who showed students caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. After that, President of France Emmanuel Macron sternly raised a question about the need to review and tighten the teaching of religion in school and the foreign financing of mosques. This statement was not taken unambiguously by all: Turkey has declared a boycott on Macron. In light of all these statements and the latest events – terrorist actions in France, what can this religious confrontation of the two civilization lead to?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** First, I would like to express my profoundest condolences to the president and all the people of France, as well as to Bishop Andre Marceau of Nice. I do it following His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, who immediately after having heard about what had happened sent his condolences to both the president of France and the Catholic Bishop of Nice.

There is no and can be no justification of actions committed by terrorists, and such things should be rebuffed in the strictest way. All the culprits should be punished and it is very important that in future such crimes should be prevented. Therefore, it is really needed to increase control over the preachers who under the pretext of Islam preach a misanthropic ideology.

It is not an interreligious conflict. We should understand that there is over a billion people living on the planet, who confess Islam, and they are not responsible for the actions of terrorists. However, at the

same time a beast should not be teased. The statements made after the first terrorist action spoke of a certain misunderstanding or underestimation of the danger existing today.

Indeed, in point were caricatures of the founder of Islam, and this insults the feelings of millions of adherents to this religion throughout the world. Why has the right to publish such caricatures to be defended in this situation? Is not it more correct to prohibit the publication of such caricatures in France and in the rest parts of the world? In order to protect the feelings of believers through a law prohibiting blasphemy and sacrilege, would not it be better to introduce a law in France such as that existing in our country, a law on the offence of the feelings of the faithful, than to get concerned over the right of caricaturists to continue their work thus provoking radically- and aggressively-disposed people?

It seems to me that it would be the right response to the sad and tragic events that have happened today.

**Gracheva:** The Presidential Council for Culture and Arts has met this week. The head of the Duma Committee for Culture, Ms. Yelena Yamposlkaya raised an interesting topic: age marking of literary works. I, for instance, did not know that our authors Victor Astafyev, Vasily Shukshin, Daniil Granin are marked "16+". *Romeo and Juliette* is marked the same. The Bible and the Quran are also 16+ in our country, that is to say, according to the law a teacher can be persecuted if he reads extracts from the Bible or the Quran to an audience younger than that. What do you think about reassessing the age restrictions, and is it necessary to lower this bar and to do it in all cases?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** I listened to that speech attentively and agreed with the remarks and proposals made, anyway as far as sacred books are concerned. It seems to me that the proposal to leave only one marking 18+ is very correct. This boundary is very relative of course as it divides people into adults and minors. The category to be marked as 18+ should include the literature that can shock a child and make a negative impact on him or her. Certainly, the sacred texts of the traditional religions should not be marked at all. We teach our children according to the Bible, the Gospel. How can these sacred book be marked 16+? In my view, it is utterly absurd.

I believe this statement has shown a very essential arbitrariness, which can be seen today in this sphere; that is to say, marking is made quite arbitrarily. Even the works included in the school syllabus are marked 16+. That is, the school syllabus includes a literary work but a schoolchild cannot buy this literary work in a bookshop because he or she turns out to be too young to read a book marked 16+.

In case of sacred texts, it seems to me in general that the sacred texts of traditional religions, even if abridged, should be included in the school syllabus, including that on literature.

**Gracheva:** I would like to raise this issue: Archbishop Chrysostom of Cyprus made a liturgical mention of the head of the schismatic church in Ukraine. The mass media immediately began to speak that the Church of Cyprus will be the next after the Churches of Alexandria and Greece to recognize officially the legitimacy of the OCU. Will the Moscow Patriarchate react to it in any way?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** We will discuss this situation at the Synod and make a synodal decision. I would like to stress that the Archbishop of Cyprus did it without notifying in due time the Synod of his own Church but contrary to the Synod's recommendations. The Archbishop was in a hurry (evidently under pressure) and made the unilateral decision that he would mention the head of the Ukrainian schismatics during the Divine Liturgy.

It has aroused a negative reaction in the Church of Cyprus. One of the metropolitans present at the liturgy stood up and left. Three more left together with him. Altogether four hierarchs of the Church of Cyprus signed on a statement strictly condemning Archbishop Chrysostomos' action and expressed their categorical disagreement with the liturgical mention of the head of the Ukrainian schismatic and with the decision of the Patriarch of Constantinople to grant the so-called 'tomos of autocephaly'; to the so-called 'Orthodox Church of Ukraine'.

**Gracheva:** Your Eminence, this week the mass media has widely quoted the Pope of Rome who gave an interview for a documentary speaking in support of the legalization of same-sex unions. The Vatican has already tried to justify this action by saying that his statement was translated rather incorrectly and it was misunderstood altogether. Have you heard this statement of the head of the Roman Catholic Church? Can it be understood in two ways? What do you think about it?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** On one hand, I think these statements have certainly caused a considerable indignation; they have shocked many, including in the Catholic Church, both those who uphold traditional values and those who stand for the preservation of traditional family way of life. But I have also heard a version that these statements were cut out from the interview, which, in the first place, was given not now but a year or two ago in Mexico.

The first part of these statements - that those with non-tradition orientation cannot be expelled from their families - was made in this context: when, say, parents find out that their child has a non-traditional orientation, in some cases a child is driven out of the family. I have heard that the Pope spoke precisely about this.

The second phrase, which was cut out from the same interview and pasted to the previous phrase, created an impression that the Pope advocates the non-traditional family, but it spoke in fact about civil unions. In my understanding, the point in the interview from which this phrase was cut out was about the

notion of the family that should not be applied to same-sex unions, and such unions should be registered differently. It is the position alleged to be voiced, but since only small fragments were cut out, it created an impression that the Pope voiced some non-traditional point of view.

On the other hand, I would like to underscore that the position of the Russian Orthodox Church in this regard is perfectly unambiguous. We maintain not only that a homosexual union is not a family but also stand against its legalization in any legal form. We believe that any way of its legalization thus legalizes unnatural co-habitation and give this union the features of the family even if formally it will not be called a family in the legislation. As far as I know, the official stand of the Catholic Church is similar, at least in the document published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (*Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* - *ed.*) in 2003. Certainly, it would be very important that the Vatican press-service should have responded to all the statements made about this matter lately and still have officially explained what Pope Francis meant and what is the teaching of the Catholic Church on this.

**Gracheva:** The position of the Russian Orthodox Church is unchangeable. And your position is that one's sexual inclinations to those of the same sex can and must be struggled with; this sin is not acquired. Then I have this question: a news has come from a Dutch zoo. A pair of gay penguins want very much to be parents (for some reason, the press service of the zoo reads these event in this way), stole an egg from a pair of lesbian penguins, doing it for the second year in row; the first time the egg did not hatch anyone. How is this can be commented? May be, nature does its own selection?

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** You had better ask Nikolay Drozdov about it or somebody who is versed in the animal life better than I am. What did happen in the Dutch zoo; do these penguins really have non-tradition orientation - this is a matter of interpretation and it is rather zoologists who will give a better answer to this question.

If we speak about humans, then we discern indeed one's inclinations and way of life. For instance, we know that some people have or develop alcohol dependence. Moreover, we know that drinking parents sometimes beget children who, upon their adulthood, begin drinking as well. What is it - inherited or acquired? Each person chooses his or her own way of life. If one chooses precisely this way of life, it means that one consciously chooses a position contrary to the teaching of the Church.

We treat those who have non-traditional orientation with pastoral responsibility: we do not drive them out of the church, nor do we excommunicate them from the Church. They come to us to make confession. We work with them and help them overcome this inclination if they really desire to overcome it. But to legalize cohabitation and say that it is normal, as psychologists would say today maintaining that if one has such inclinations it means that it is normal and that one should fulfill oneself in this way, not

otherwise, is something we cannot agree in any way.

**Gracheva:** Thank you very much, Your Eminence, for having commented on the latest events.

**Metropolitan Hilarion:** Thank you, Ekaterina.

*In the second part of the program, Metropolitan Hilarion answered questions from the viewers, which came to the website of the Church and the World talk show.*

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