Metropolitan Hilarion: Archbishop of Cyprus can be no longer liturgically mentioned in the Russian Orthodox Church

As the mass media have reported, Archbishop Chrysostomos II of Cyprus has mentioned Epifaniy Dumenko for the first time as 'primate' of the Ukrainian church, thus de facto *recognising the schismatic structure 'Orthodox Church of Ukriane' that he heads. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, speaks about a possible reaction of the Russian Orthodox Church to the recognition of the 'OCU' by the Church of Cyprus in his talk to RIA Novosti news agency.*

- Your Eminence, how will the Russian Church react to the recognition of the Ukrainian schismatics by the Archbishop of Cyprus?

- We deeply regret to hear about this deplorable event. The decision will be made by the Holy Synod. However, I believe the Archbishop of Cyprus will be crossed out from the diptychs of the Russian Orthodox Church, that is to say. the liturgical mention of his name will be suspended until all the circumstances of this development are clear. It means the discontinuance of the Eucharistic communion with a particular person, not the Church of Cyprus as such. It will be important to understand whether he did it on his own or with the consent of the Synod. The Greek mass media write that he did it without the consent of the Synod.

- **Under what circumstances was this liturgical mention made?**

- They write that the Archbishop, together with the Metropolitan of Pathos, were consecrating Bishop Pancratios of Arcinoe, who was elected by the Synod as Vicar Bishop of the Metropolis of Pathos. In attendance (but not serving) were some other hierarchs of the Church of Cyprus. Some of them left the church when they heard the name of the leader of the Ukrainian schismatics coming from the lips of the Archbishop.

- **How do you explain this decision made by the Archbishop?**

- It is no secret for anybody that pressure was exerted on him by the Patriarch of Constantinople who is

very interested in seeing at least one more Church recognizing his lawless action. There was also pressure from the USA where there is an interest in weakening the Russian Church and setting off the Greek world against the Slavic world.

- **Could the recent visit of the Patriarch of Alexandria to Cyprus make an influence on the Archbishop of Cyprus? Indeed, he, too, has decided to make the liturgical mention of Epifaniy on his own, without any authorization by his Synod.**

- It cannot be excluded.

- **The Archbishop of Cyprus made unfriendly statements about the Russian Church and the Patriarch of Moscow earlier as well. For instance, in one of the interviews he related this about his talk with Patriarch Kirill: 'He wants to be the first. I said to him that he would never become the first. For the last seventeen centuries the Patriarch of Constantinople has been recognized as the first among all the Orthodox Primates. You should understand this'. How can you comment this?**

- Can you imagine that such a talk did really take place? I was present at all the meetings of Patriarch Kirill and Archbishop Chrisostomos and he never said anything like this. Such a talk could take place only in the Archbishop's imagination because, first, he would never say anything like this in the Patriarch of Moscow's face, even if he thought so to himself; secondly, the Russian Church has never claimed primacy in the Orthodox world. We have an official document 'Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on Primacy in the Universal Church' adopted by the Holy Synod in 2013. It is written in it in black and white: that from the 11th century 'up to the present time, the primacy of honour in the Orthodox Church on the universal level belongs to the Patriarch of Constantinople as the first among equal Primates of Local Orthodox Churches'.

- **What will be the consequences of this decision for the relationships between the Orthodox Churches of Russia and Cyprus?**

- We will continue communion with all the hierarchs who do not recognize the personal decision of the Archbishop. The Russian people have always been close to the people of Cyprus; our pilgrims will continue coming to the holy places of those metropolises of the Church of Cyprus whose heads will remain in communion with the Russian Church.

But standing above all for us is the unity of our Church and the resolute preservation of the dogmatic teaching and canonical tradition of Holy Orthodoxy. The fact that particular hierarchs and even Primates of Churches violate canons is regrettable. However, we cannot and will not waive Orthodoxy and the

canons. And we will steadfastly safeguard the unity of our Church.

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