Metropolitan Hilarion: the initiative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to hold a meeting of Primates of Orthodox Church to discuss the situation in world Orthodoxy is very positively assessed in the Russian Orthodox Church

On November 21, 2019, after seeing off His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem at Sheremetyevo airport as he completed his visit to the Russian Orthodox Church, the head of the Moscow Patriarchate department for external church relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, answered questions from mass media reporters.

Question: Your Eminence, how do you assess the results of the visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem?

Metropolitan Hilarion: We in the Russian Orthodox Church have given a high value to the very fact of the visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem and results of this visit. His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos had an opportunity to meet with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, to discuss urgent topics concerning the bilateral relations between our two Churches and items on the inter-Orthodox agenda.

There was also a meeting of the two Patriarchs with the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, and the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem gave a high value to the results of that meeting. He spoke at length about the positive impression made on him by our President.

On November 21, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos was presented with the prize of the International Public Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Nations that has been awarded him for his outstanding contribution to the cause of preserving inter-Orthodox unity and interaction.

Finally, and it is a matter of no small importance, His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, assisted by a great number of hierarchs of the Russian Church, celebrated together with them the Divine Liturgy on the Day of Archangel Michael and All the Heavenly Bodiless Powers. According to the statute of the Russian Orthodox Church, special petitions were exclaimed for the unity of all the Local Orthodox Churches.

I believe the visit of the Patriarch of Jerusalem will become another significant landmark in the history of relations between our two Churches.

Question: How do you assess the initiative of the Patriarch of Jerusalem to hold a meeting of the heads of Local Orthodox Churches in Jordan under the aegis of King Abdallah II to discuss the crisis that has arisen in the world Orthodoxy?

Metropolitan Hilarion: We assess this initiative very positively. We have always been ready for dialogue and repeatedly said so to the Patriarch of Constantinople.

However, the Patriarch of Constantinople did not wish a dialogue. During his visit to him in August 2018, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia proposed that the Ukrainian problem be discussed on the bilateral and inter-Orthodox level. However, all the proposals were rejected because the Patriarch of Constantinople had already decided “to grant autocephaly to Ukraine”, as he put it, which actually resulted in the bestowal of “a tomos of autocephaly” to the Ukrainian schismatics. We can see today the sad consequences of that event.

We are glad that the Primate of precisely the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem has set forward the initiative to hold an inter-Orthodox meeting. In the liturgical texts, it is referred to as the Mother of All Churches. Thus, in the Sunday stichera sung at “O Lord, I have cried”, Tone 8, there are the following words: “Rejoice, O Zion, holy, the mother of churches, the dwelling of God; for you were the first to receive forgiveness of sins through the Resurrection”.

The Church of Jerusalem historically has the first place in the family of Local Orthodox Churches because it was in Jerusalem that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered and died on the Cross: in Jerusalem. He was raised from the dead; the Jerusalem community of the apostles became the witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ. Nobody will ever deprive the Church of Jerusalem of this historical primacy. And today, in the situation of a pan-Orthodox crisis, this she has come out with a very important initiative. I hope, the other Local Orthodox Churches will support it, and the problem of healing the Ukrainian schism will eventually be considered on the pan-Orthodox level to receive a pan-Orthodox solution.

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