



## **Metropolitan Hilarion: Filaret Denisenko was and remains a schismatic**

In his comments to the Greek Romfea church news agency Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, offered his assessment of the decision taken by the schismatic "Kievan Patriarchate" to give Filaret Denisenko the title of "His Holiness and Beatitude Archbishop and Metropolitan of Kiev – the Mother of Russian Lands, hiero-archimandrite of the Kiev Caves and Pochaev Lavras." Metropolitan Hilarion said:

For us Filaret was and remains a schismatic. All this farce with the titles once again shows that the decision of his excommunication in 1997 was correct in every respect. It was recognized by all Local Churches without any exception, the Patriarchate of Constantinople including. Filaret can appropriate as many titles as he likes, but the core of the matter does not change: he was not and is not the Patriarch. Thus, he is neither His Holiness, nor His Beatitude.

The appropriation of new titles by Filaret, who is encouraged by the support of Constantinople, is not so surprising as the support as such. Have Patriarch Bartholomew's counselors, who recommended him to rally to this odious person's defense, thought carefully? Didn't they thus pull the rug out from their leader?

Filaret's appropriation of the title of archimandrite of the Kiev Caves and Pochaev Lavras falls in line with his many times announced claims to these monasteries sacred for the millions of Orthodox Ukrainians. When Constantinople took decision on reinstating him (though it is not clear in which rank – patriarch? metropolitan?) it called upon "all involved parties to avoid the appropriation of churches, monasteries and other property, and any other acts of violence and retaliation." And Ukrainian President Poroshenko has assured that no property redistribution would occur.

However, can one believe these calls and assurances when the chief leader of the schism, now justified by Constantinople, does not hide his plans of seizing the main holy sites of the canonical Ukrainian Church, while the nationalistic groups are ready to commit the seizure with his 'blessing'? It seems that only the absence of tomos of autocephaly still deters from violent actions those willing to do away with the canonical Church as quickly as possible.