Metropolitan Hilarion: a full-scale theological dialogue with Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland has now proved impossible

At a request of the Interfax-Religion news agency, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk has commented upon the statement of Archbishop Kari Mäkinen of Turku that the Russian Orthodox Church has suspended dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland because of differences concerning the status of sex and gender minorities.

As the DECR chairman noted, in recent years the Protestant community in the West is going through a serious crisis caused by the fact that many communities have reviewed some important provisions of the Christian theological and moral teaching. “The impact made by liberal secularism on church life has led some Protestant communities in the West to make a decision to establish female priesthood and female episcopate. It has considerably complicated our theological dialogues with them since their aim was to bring Orthodox Churches and Protestant communities closer together, not to divide them. Another step was made by the decision of several Protestant communities to bless same-sex unions. As a result, dialogue with them has become impossible”, he said.

He stressed that this practice is directly contrary to the Christian morality and the moral norms on which the gospel’s teaching is based. “The rejection of fundamental ethical norms erodes the notions of sin and virtue and deprives people of moral guidelines, making them helpless in face of their own passions”, he noted.

In recent years, the discussion on these issues has intensified in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland as well. According to the DECR chairman, their consideration as part of the theological dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church could make a certain contribution to the elaboration of appropriate arguments. “Regrettably, the Finnish side has proved unprepared for discussing these issues in the language of theology rather than practical expediency, on the basis of the common church tradition and Christian teaching on morality”, he said.

“A full-scale theological dialogue with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, as it was in previous decades, has proved impossible today. Nevertheless, the Russian Orthodox Church hopes to preserve and develop relations with this Church in the task of social service, peacemaking and other areas”, Metropolitan Hilarion concluded.

DECR Communication Service

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