Metropolitan Hilarion: In today's society the voice of the Church often becomes a voice crying in the wilderness

Before the beginning of the 4th Orthodox-Catholic Forum on Religion and Cultural Diversity: Challenges for the Christian Churches in Europe to take place from June 2 to 5, 2014, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, answered questions from Byelorussian journalists.

- The forum is to deal with challenges facing the Christian Churches in Europe.What primary problems and challenges would you bring out?

- The processes taking place in Western Europe are of much concern for us because what actually happens is a conscious rejection of the Christian heritage by many European states. What do we see when we take a walk in the most famous streets in Europe? First of all, we see Christian churches: Notre Dame in Paris, Westminster Abbey in London, St. Peter's in Rome. Even the appearance of European cities shows that Europe was a Christian continent. Of course, in Europe there have always lived people of other religions, but Christianity was a dominant religion and remains such because most of Europeans still preserve to a greater or lesser extent their links with the Christian roots. But at present a situation has developed in Europe in which it is atheism that has become a dominant ideology, or the form of pluralism which presupposes that religion should have no place in public space and that religion can exist only in the private life of individuals.

We are not happy with this situation, of course. We believe that Christian Churches should have a right to voice their point of view, including in the public space. It grieves us to see the adoption of laws which contradict not only the Christian moral teaching but the traditional morality altogether, on which people's life has been built for centuries, for instance, to see the attempts to equalize same-sex unions with marriages. In fact it is conscious and systemic dismantling of traditional family values.

- And how this situation can be changed? The Church has no legislative power to adopt or change laws, nor any governmental levers... What instruments do you have and how effective are they?

- The most important instrument at the Church's disposal is her own voice, which should resound and be heard by all those who are capable of hearkening to it. Of course, the Church's voice often becomes a voice crying in the wilderness. Nevertheless we keep speaking and will continue bearing witness to the values which, we believe, are of indisputable significance.

In doing so, we are not going to impose anything on anybody. We do not impose theological views or the religious worldview, but we speak of the values that relate to real human life and that the family needs to be fostered and a human life needs to be valued from its conception to natural death. These are simple things which the modern society finds difficult to perceive.

- Your Eminence, last November there was an Orthodox-Catholic Russian-Polish dialogue in Warsaw. Considering the recent political developments, is there a fear that this dialogue may be stopped, or there is still a hope that the next forum planned for Moscow will take place and the dialogue between Polish Catholics and Russian Orthodox will continue?

- I think, this dialogue will continue, but I deeply regret the fact that the Polish Bishops' Conference expressed support for the forces in Ukraine which destabilize the public order and are guilty of people's deaths. I think it was a great mistake of Polish Catholic Bishops, just as a great mistake was, in my opinion, the support for the Uniates expressed by the Latin Rite Catholics. The Uniates in Ukraine show an outrageous behaviour. It should be said that in history there were many cases where they used political power to come out against the Orthodox Church.

Uniatism, in general, was a certain special project of the Catholic Church for converting Orthodox to Catholicism. It is no secret for anybody. But, regrettably, this special project remains the same even today. While we conduct dialogue and organize joint forums with the Roman Catholic Church, the Uniates concurrently continue their activities aimed to undermine Orthodoxy. The whole rhetoric of the Uniates in Ukraine boils down to the attempts to divide the united multinational Russian Orthodox Church, to tear Ukraine away from Russia, and their ultimate goal is to subject all the Orthodox to the pope. As a matter of fact, the Uniates do not conceal it.

I think, Uniatism is a very serious problem which we have encountered in the Orthodox-Catholic relations, and when we try to push these relations forward, the Uniates by their dishonest actions keep throwing us back.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/51416/