Metropolitan Hilarion: the schism provoked by Constantinople is developing outside the folds of our Church

On November 25, the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus issued a communique stating that 'it does not object to the decision' of Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus who has begun to mention during the liturgy the head of the Ukrainian schismatics Epifaniy Dumenko as primate of the Church of Ukraine. The decision has split the episcopate of Cyprus into two parts. What developments can ensue from this decision, Ekaterina Gracheva, hostess of the Church and World TV program asked the head of the Moscow Patriarchate's department for external church relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk.

'It is difficult to predict how this schism will develop in the Orthodox world but I would like to emphasize that this schism is happening outside the folds of our Church', His Eminence Hilarion said, 'The Russian Orthodox Church remains united and consolidated, her episcopate both in Russia and Ukraine and Belarus and other countries is solid'.

Speaking about developments in other Local Orthodox Churches, the DECR chairman stated, 'We can see that Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople has become the initiator of this schism and is its principal culprit. It was expected that the Churches which look to Constantinople (and these are primarily those which speak Greek, such as those of Greece and Cyprus) would eventually follow Patriarch Bartholomew. He is perceived in these Churches not as first among equals but actually as their chief. Therefore, if he pointed out something to them and insisted on something, they would sooner or later obey it'.

However, as far as the Church of Cyprus is concerned, Metropolitan Hilarion believes that the synodal decision made this week has not put an end to the story since the recent developments have shown that there is a serious division in the Synod over the Ukrainian issue. 'The members of the Synod who voted against the decision have remained unconvinced - they will neither concelebrate with the schismatics nor mention the schismatic leaders during the liturgy; in this regard, they remain very first and staunch. And we will yet see how the situation will develop further within the Orthodox Church of Cyprus', the DECR chairman summed up his answer

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