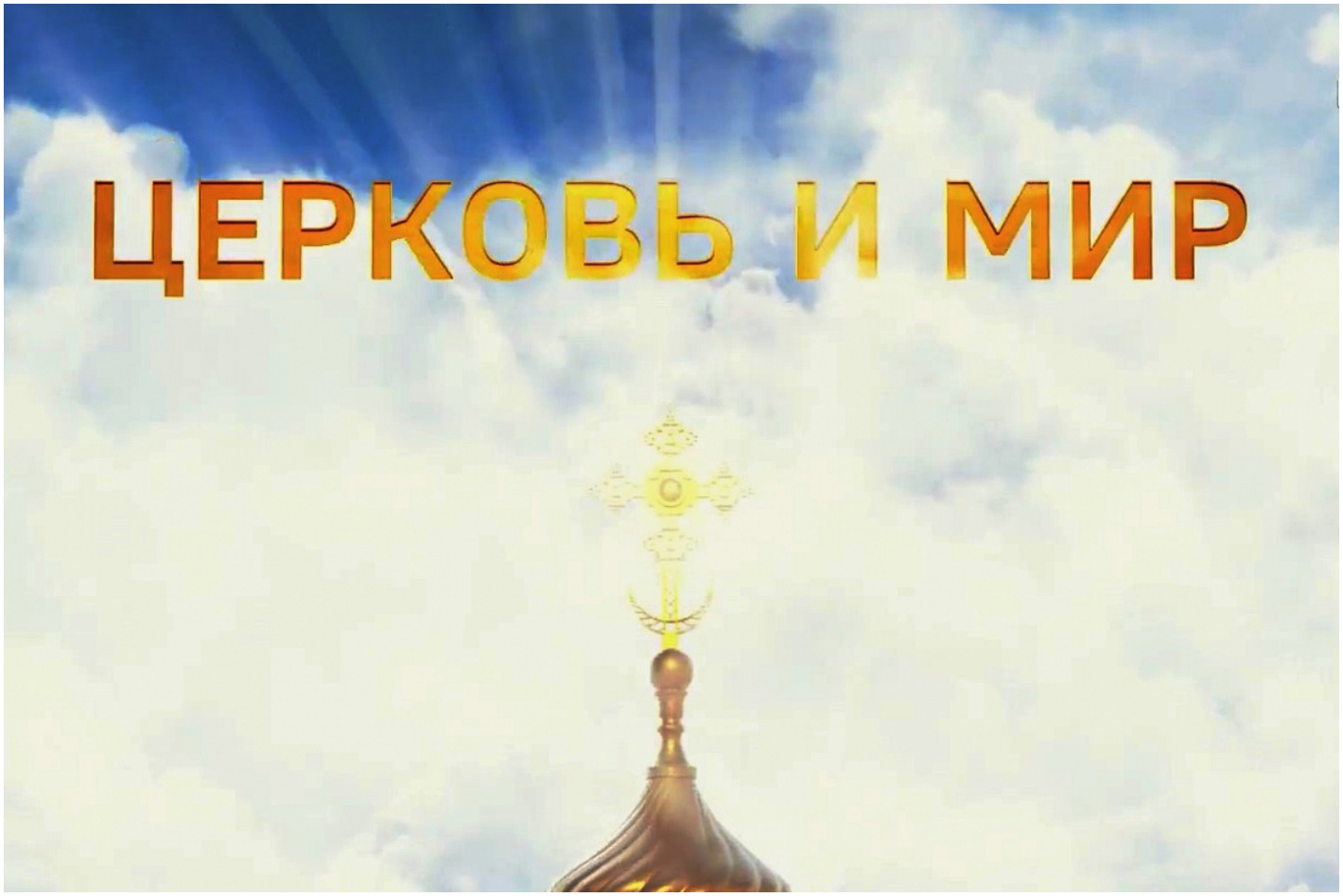
Metropolitan Hilarion: Patriarch of Constantinople has brought the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue to deadlock



The meeting at the end of June between Pope Francis and a delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople led by Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon has raised a new wave of discussions about the prospects of an agreement between Phanar and Vatican on the “unity” of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians.

At the request of the host of “The Church and the World” TV program Yekaterina Gracheva, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, offered his comments on this topic. He pointed out that it was a regular annual meeting: on the Feast Day of Sts. Peter and Paul (by Western Calendar) a delegation of the Patriarchate of Constantinople comes to Rome to meet with the Pope.

In regard to the repeated statements of Phanar about a certain oncoming unity with the Roman

Catholics, Metropolitan Hilarion said that in the past there had been already one case when the Patriarchate of Constantinople signed a union with the Roman Church. “This happened at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in the middle of the 15th century. Afterwards, the union was repudiated by the Local Orthodox Churches and in the end by Constantinople, too. Therefore, we cannot exclude possibility that Constantinople might unilaterally make some sort of agreements with the Roman Catholic or any other Church. All the more so that the Patriarch of Constantinople has been speaking recently about some special prerogatives, of which we knew nothing but which allegedly were granted to him by the apostles, and which he is not going to discuss,” said His Eminence.

Metropolitan Hilarion pointed out that this kind of viewpoints had already caused the regrettable developments in Ukraine, when unilaterally, without consulting with the Local Churches and against their will, Patriarch Bartholomew committed an anti-canonical act that provoked schism in the Orthodox world.

“It is possible to expect the schism of world Orthodoxy to grow deeper and deeper, if the Patriarch of Constantinople continues to single himself out more and more and raise himself further and further up to the height of the special rights and privileges he has ascribed to himself,” said the DECR chairman.

His Eminence Hilarion finds it to be a great problem for the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue that in his relations with the Roman Catholic Church the Patriarch of Constantinople positions himself as the head of the entire Orthodox Church. Especially now that the Eucharistic union is broken within the Orthodox Church because of the anti-canonical moves of Patriarch Bartholomew, he is not eligible to represent either the Russian Orthodox Church, which has excluded him from its diptyches, or other Orthodox Churches which disagree with his policy. “He can represent only the Church of Constantinople. Probably, he can also represent those Churches which will authorize him to do so. But this will not be a majority of the Orthodox faithful, but just a small part of them,” underscored Metropolitan Hilarion.

Another important problem for the dialogue with Catholics is caused by the fact that “in the recent years, the Patriarch of Constantinople has been trying to use it to boost up his primacy in the Orthodox Church, which is in fact nothing more than the primacy of honor but which he wants to turn into a semblance of papal authority in the Roman Catholic Church,” said the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations.

“Orthodoxy has never had one single supreme head for all Orthodox Churches,” underlined Metropolitan Hilarion. He pointed out that the new teaching that is now actively propagated by Constantinople arouses disapproval in the Local Orthodox Churches, and has already brought about schism. Moreover, “it is the reason why the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue has reached a

deadlock.”

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