Metropolitan Hilarion: The Holy Synod is to decide how the presence of the Russian Church in Africa is to be structured.



The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on the 23rd and 24th September adopted a resolution to examine the appeals of clerics of the Greek Orthodox Church of Alexandria to be received under the omophorion of the Moscow Patriarchate. The metropolitan of Volokolamsk Hilarion commented thus on this resolution on the The Church and the World programme on the Rossia-24 TV station: “When the Patriarch of Alexandria joined the Patriarch of Constantinople in recognizing the schismatic structure in Ukraine as an Orthodox Church by commemorating its leader at divine services, this caused an internal schism within the Church of Alexandria, which was to be expected. A number of priests who were not in agreement with this commemoration and recognition of the schism appealed to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill and requested to be received into the Russian Orthodox Church.” The chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate pointed out that we are dealing with several dozen priests.

Within the Russian Church it was hoped that the Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa Theodore II would revise this decision; this, however, was not to be. “In August of this year Patriarch Theodore visited the island of Imbros, the birthplace of Patriarch Bartholomew. They celebrated together, and Epiphanius Dumenko, the leader of the Ukrainian schismatics, participated in the service. From the perspective of the church canons, if a bishop serves with schismatics, he himself falls into schism. Unfortunately, the church canons offer us no other interpretation,” said the chairman of the DECR.

After this concelebration, “Patriarch Theodore has irrevocably associated himself with the schism” and the Russian Orthodox Church has no grounds to reject the appeals of clerics of the Alexandrian Patriarchate, metropolitan Hilarion noted. “How long these appeals will be examined and how our presence will be formally structured in Africa is still to be decided at the forthcoming sessions of the Holy Synod,” the metropolitan said in conclusion.

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