



Metropolitan Hilarion: Constantinople's claims have brought forth bitter fruits of schism in the world Orthodoxy



On November 11, 2021, an international conference on the Conciliarity of the Church: Theological, Canonical and Historical Dimensions opened in the Kiev Theological Academy.

In his message of greetings to the organizers and participants of the forum, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, stated as topical the issue of primacy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which has become an apple of discord in the world Orthodoxy.

“As is known, beginning from the mid-11th century, this Patriarchate has occupied the first place of honour in the family of the Local Orthodox Churches. It was endowed with it due to historical circumstances”, Metropolitan Hilarion reminded the conference, “For many centuries, Rome, as the capital city of the empire, had been the first see in Christendom. After Emperor Constantine founded a new capital city on the Bosphorus shores, the Second Ecumenical Council adopted a resolution that equalized the New Rome - Constantinople, as “the city of the tsar and synkletos”, with old Rome. Owing to this decision confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon in its Canon 28, Constantinople occupied the second place after Rome in the diptych of the Churches. However, when in 1054 a rupture happened in the communion between Constantinople and Rome, the primacy in the family of the Eastern Orthodox Churches automatically as it were went to Constantinople. But it was the primacy in honour, not in power, and the Patriarchate of Constantinople was perceived as “the first among equal”.

However, in our days, theologians in the Church of Constantinople insist that the Primate of this Church is “first without equal”, the DECR chairman pointed out. They declare that “he can reshape the boundaries of the Local Churches at his own discretion and, that he can invade into the boundaries of Local Churches and introduce his own order in them and arrange his own stauropegia; that he is the highest appellation instance for all the Churches; that by the stroke of a pen he can abolish a millions-strong Church that has over one hundred bishops, over twelve thousand parishes, over two hundred fifty monasteries and transfer her rights and name to a schismatic structure; that he can declare a self-ordained man a lawful bishop and ‘return the rank’ to a man who has never had such a rank or have lost it due to his falling into a schism”. In addition, according to their opinion, the Patriarch of Constantinople ostensibly has the exclusive rights to all the Orthodox diaspora.

“In 1950, Schema-archimandrite Sofroniy (Sakharov), now ranked among saints by the Church of Constantinople, called all these claims “a heresy of Constantinople’s papism”. He predicted that sooner or later this heresy would lead to a schism in the world Orthodoxy. Alas, the prophecy of Staretz Sofroniy has come true, and today we are harvesting the bitter fruits of those claims of Constantinople which were yet in germ in his time”, Metropolitan Hilarion stated.

He is convinced that the threats to Orthodoxy resulting from the actions of the Patriarch of Constantinople demand a wide conciliar reflection by the hierarchy, clergy, monastics and laity.

“I hope that today’s conference held in the Kiev Theological Academy will make its contribution to the comprehension of the challenges encountered today by the Orthodox Church”, His Eminence Hilarion stressed and wished God’s help to all the participants in the conference and peace and prosperity to the much-suffering and persecuted Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

DECR Communication Service

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