



## **Metropolitan Hilarion: reunion with The Russian Church Abroad is a very good example of how healing internal conflicts may work**



On June 5, 2022, in the program “Church and the World” on the channel “Russia 24”, the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk , answered questions from the host Ekaterina Gracheva and viewers.

E. Gracheva: Hello ! This is the program "Church and the World" on the TV channel "Russia 24". We are discussing current events that have taken place this week in Russia and the world with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate . Hello, lord!

Metropolitan Hilarion : Hello, Catherine! Hello dear brothers and sisters ! Gracheva: The main news happened in Kiev: in Ukraine, the schism of Ukrainian Orthodoxy was officially formalized, as many characterized this decision of the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. How predictable was this decision for the Russian Orthodox Church?

Metropolitan Hilarion: This decision was quite predictable, but I do not agree with its characterization as a schism. The point is that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has once again confirmed the status it has had since 1990. This status is determined by the Diploma of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II , which was issued to the then Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine Filaret. According to this Charter, the Ukrainian

Church is self-governing.

The authorities of Ukraine under President Poroshenko, and then schismatics and journalists, tried to prove that the Ukrainian Church is not independent, that its center of control is in Moscow, that it receives instructions from Moscow. On this basis, a law was adopted, the effect of which was suspended, but not repealed, according to which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church must re-register and receive the name "Russian Church in Ukraine." But this is not the Russian Church. Her control center is located in Kyiv. It is independent of Moscow, not accountable to the Synod in Moscow, either administratively, financially, or in any other way.

The Ukrainian Church at this Council once again confirmed that it is self-governing. She declared this publicly, and appropriate amendments were made to the Charter of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

E. Gracheva: Journalist Oleksandr Shchipkov, who maintains his Telegram channel, described these events as follows: "On May 27, 2022, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church disappeared. The customer is the US State Department. The executor is Metropolitan Onufry (Berezovsky)." Maybe it's an exaggeration to always look for an American trace even in the events that take place near a neighbor in Ukraine?

Metropolitan Hilarion : I think that in this case, Alexander Vladimirovich hastened to react. He had to either wait for the official reaction of the Holy Synod, or consult with someone who is directly responsible for voicing such topics in the Russian Orthodox Church, in particular, with Vladimir Romanovich Legoyda .

Our Holy Synod has expressed its full support and understanding to all archpastors, pastors, monastics and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is subjected to unprecedented persecution by local authorities, nationalist circles of the Ukrainian public, schismatics and the media.

The Holy Synod reaffirmed what was declared at the Council of the Ukrainian Church: that its status of independence and independence in governance is conditioned by the Diploma of His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of 1990, that is, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has been and has been independent for more than 30 years.

At the same time, the Synod stated that the amendments made to the Charter of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church require further study on our part. If we talk about the "American trace" in these decisions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, then I think that it should not be looked for there. The Americans, of course, directly influence the policy of the Ukrainian state, they directly influence the schismatic group that calls itself the "Orthodox Church of Ukraine." As for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, it is completely independent and self-governing, and is not subject to such external influences.

E. Gracheva: What fate awaits the values, the property that belongs to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church?

Metropolitan Hilarion: I hope that everything belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will remain with her. Of course, when the schismatics learned that a Council was being prepared in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and that the independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church could be proclaimed at this Council, they hastened to declare their “rights” to the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. They demanded from the state that part of the buildings of the Lavra be transferred to them for use.

However, I think that the actions taken by the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, among other things, were aimed at protecting its property, because the meaning of this law, which was introduced and suspended, is not only to forcibly rename the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, but also in re-registering all parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under this new name. And in the current situation, when local authorities are very actively putting pressure on the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, on individual parishes, each such re-registration will essentially mean that the authorities will force parishes or entire dioceses to go into schism. This is what the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is trying with all its might to prevent.

E. Gracheva: For you personally, the event of May 27 is still not the final schism of Orthodoxy?

Metropolitan Hilarion: The conflicts that take place on the political field and are resolved, including by military means, are very different from the conflicts that take place within the family of the Local Orthodox Churches. Our internal conflicts, I hope, are temporary and will be healed sooner or later. The story itself will put everything in its place.

We know very good examples of how schisms that have existed for a long time have been healed. A vivid example is the history of the Russian Church Abroad. The Russian Church Abroad separated from the Moscow Patriarchate back in the 1920s, and this separation has existed for more than 80 years. In the churches of the Russian Church Abroad, the name of the Moscow Patriarch was not commemorated, there was no Eucharistic communion between the Church Abroad and the Church in the Fatherland, various mutual accusations were made by both structures against each other. But then the time came when an understanding arose on both sides that this split needed to be healed. Negotiations were held, meetings were held between the leadership of the Russian Church Abroad with both Patriarch Alexy II and the head of the Russian state, President Putin. A lot of confusion, questions and prejudices were removed, and this historic reunion took place. I hope that the schisms that arise today will also be healed. But this, of course, requires time and good will.

E. Gracheva: Recently, a lot of schismatic movements have arisen precisely in the Orthodox family, there is no such thing among Catholics. Just a week ago we discussed the events around the Macedonian Church. And this week, the news came that at a meeting of the Synod of the Russian

Orthodox Church, the appeal of Metropolitan Innokenty of Lithuania on granting the status of a self-governing Church to the diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church in Lithuania was considered. At the same time, the Lithuanian authorities appeal to Patriarch Bartholomew with a request to restore the jurisdiction of Constantinople there. If not for a special military operation on the territory of Ukraine, would Lithuania have taken this step? Is this a consequence of these events, or was the soil warmed up earlier for this?

Metropolitan Hilarion : First of all, I would like to respond to your remark that there are no schisms among Catholics. In fact, there have been many schisms in the history of the Catholic Church. The main such split is the emergence of Protestantism in the 16th century. The Protestant movement first swept part of Europe, and then spread to the whole world. There are several hundred million Protestants in the world today, and these are churches that at one time broke away from the Catholic Church or those that arose later in the Protestant family. In addition, there is a so-called Old Catholic schism in the Catholic Church - these are Catholics who left the Catholic Church after the Vatican Council proclaimed the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope, that is, this is already the second half of the 19th century. There is also the so-called Society of Pius XII, which has its own hierarchy and which is also not subject to the Pope. Thus, schisms arise in Catholicism as well.

If we talk about Lithuania, then, of course, this situation is very painful for us, including for me personally, because I know the Lithuanian diocese very well: I began my service in the Russian Church in the Lithuanian diocese, was tonsured a monk in Vilna Holy Spirit Monastery. In the Diocese of Lithuania, I was ordained both a deacon and a priest. This is a small diocese: there are several dozen clergymen.

Until recently, nothing foreshadowed such a development. But I must say that the political situation has greatly influenced what is happening now in Lithuania. Several clergy took advantage of this political situation to oppose the ruling bishop, Metropolitan Innocent of Vilna and Lithuania. They turned to the Patriarchate of Constantinople for help, and they were supported by the Lithuanian leadership, also turning to the Patriarchate of Constantinople for their part. Let's see, of course, how the Patriarchate of Constantinople will react to these appeals, but usually in recent times it does not miss the opportunity to inflict damage on the Russian Orthodox Church where such an opportunity arises.

For my part, I think that the attempt to split the already small Orthodox community in Lithuania is doomed to failure. The majority of Orthodox believers will still remain in the canonical Vilna -Lithuanian diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church. And the support of this small schism, which has now arisen in the Lithuanian diocese, on the part of the Lithuanian authorities, in my opinion, is a big mistake. President of Ukraine Poroshenko made a similar mistake a few years ago, and we see what the support for the split in Ukraine led to.

E. Gracheva: Recently, the name of the new head of the Department of the Russian Orthodox Church for Cooperation with the Armed Forces became known, he became Archpriest Oleg Ovcharov. To be honest, before this news, I did not even know that the Russian Orthodox Church has a Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces. In my understanding, when major projects are being implemented, such as the construction of the temple of the Armed Forces, I understand that some departments, control and supervision commissions can be temporarily created. But why should the Russian Orthodox Church have a Department for Cooperation with the Armed Forces on a permanent basis?

Metropolitan Hilarion : First of all, to provide pastoral care for military personnel. Military personnel are people who need pastoral care just like all other members of our society. There are many Orthodox believers among them. When a priest is in a military unit or on a warship, when he finds himself in a combat zone, this provides a very great moral, ethical and spiritual support to the military.

I twice visited the base of the Russian army in Syria and talked with the priests who serve there. They come there for several months, take turns and serve as a shift method. But, indeed, I talked with both commanders and ordinary servicemen, and they told me how important it is for them that a priest is nearby, that they can come for advice, for confession, and partake of the Holy Mysteries of Christ.

There are certain difficulties in the relationship between the Church and the army, due to the fact that the status of a military priest has not been fully regulated. At the moment, the priest is equated with civilian personnel, which means, for example, that he cannot be together with military personnel in the combat zone. I think that the task [of the new head of the Department of the Russian Orthodox Church for Cooperation with the Armed Forces] will also include solving this problem so that military priests receive the appropriate status and can help our servicemen on the battlefield.

E. Gracheva: Vladyka, and now to the questions sent by our viewers. Question: "In the Revelation of John, the Lord says: 'I am Alpha and Omega . But why are the letters of the Greek alphabet involved here, and not Aramaic or Hebrew? For example, " alef" and "shin". The letter " tire" means "fire" and there would have been much more references to the Last Judgment. Can you explain please".

Metropolitan Hilarion: All the books of the New Testament, as far as we know, are written in Greek, including the Apocalypse. This is such a peculiar phenomenon from which Christianity began: that Jesus Christ and His disciples spoke Aramaic. The first spoken language of the Christian community was Aramaic, but all the monuments of early Christian literature known to us, that is, all four Gospels, the epistles of the Apostle Paul, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the Apocalypse were written in Greek. This is due to the fact that the Greek language was the main spoken language in the Roman Empire, Christianity very quickly went beyond the borders of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, it

very quickly moved to other regions of the Roman Empire and by the time these books were created, including Apocalypse, the main spoken language of the already multiplied Christian community was Greek.

That is why both the Apocalypse and other books use not only the Greek language, but also Greek symbols. Alpha and omega, as you know, are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, that is, the symbolic meaning of using these letters is an indication of the universal nature of Christianity, and when it comes to Jesus Christ, of his power over the world, over the entire universe.

E. Gracheva: Question: "Hello, Metropolitan Hilarion . Why are you always surrounded by beautiful young people, sometimes even young girls, during the Liturgy at the Moscow church "Joy of All Who Sorrow" on Bolshaya Ordynka? It confuses me, and I don't understand what it has to do with Christianity."

Metropolitan Hilarion : Let's start with the fact that each bishop has subdeacons. Subdeacons are, as a rule, young people who either study at a theological seminary or are preparing to enter there. There are always about ten of them at the bishop's service. If we add to this altar servers , readers, singers, then probably ten or twenty more people.

In addition, we have a youth movement in the temple - about fifty young people, boys and girls (there are more of the latter), and they are all very nice. But I don't think it's their fault at all. The Orthodox Church does not look at the faces of people who come to the temple at all. We accept everyone: young and old, healthy and sick, beautiful and less beautiful. But, for example, unlike the viewer who asked the question, I am not only not embarrassed, but, on the contrary, I am very pleased that we have a lot of young people in the church, and that our young people are very actively involved in worship.

I told, for example, that all the broadcasts that we carry out, that is, the broadcasts of daily services, in the morning and in the evening, are broadcasts of hierarchal services. In each such broadcast, several people are involved: one stands on the camera, the other - on the other camera, the third - at the remote control. They have to change somehow. So, all this work is entrusted to young people, including beautiful girls. They do this work with pleasure, with joy. I am very happy and I would even use a word that is not entirely churchly - I am proud that we have many young people in the church who take both worship and parish life to heart.

E. Gracheva: But sometimes the inappropriate behavior of the clergy is the reason why young people or those who have entered the church for the first time get frightened, withdraw, or leave and never return. I have witnessed several such examples. One of them is cited by a viewer: "Good afternoon, Vladyka Hilarion . I want to tell you about a strange case that really confused me. In one Moscow church, after

the consecration of my cross, the priest shamed me for not giving him the money personally, but putting it in a box on the church. How to treat it? Is there really a rule that a donation for a demand should be given only personally to the priest who made it?

Metropolitan Hilarion : There is no such rule. The priest in this case acted incorrectly. If you want to appeal against his actions, you can write a letter to His Holiness the Patriarch, give the name of this priest, and he will be punished.

E. Gracheva: Question: “I erected a monument on my wife's grave with her photo, and also marked my photo on it. Is it possible to do so? Are there any church prescriptions for this ?” Metropolitan Hilarion: There are no ecclesiastical prescriptions on this score. A church monument to a deceased person is a cross on which a photograph of the deceased can be placed. I have not heard of such a custom to post group photos, unless it is a mass grave. I don't think it's right to post pictures of living people on graves.

E. Gracheva: Thank you very much, Vladyka, for answering our questions and those of the viewers .  
Metropolitan Hilarion : Thank you, Catherine! Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to end this transmission with the words of the Apostle Paul from the Epistle to the Ephesians :

“Everyone will receive from the Lord according to the measure of the good that he has done” ( Eph . 6.8 ). I wish you all the best and may the Lord keep you all!

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