



Dividing line between Moscow Patriarchate and Russian Church Outside Russia went through people's lives

On May 19, 2012, on the air of the Church and the World talk-show, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk also touched upon the theme of reunification between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Outside Russia, the anniversary of which was marked on May 17.

The Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations reminded TV viewers of what had preceded the unification. Actually the division in the Russian diaspora had existed for 90 years: 'Russian people who found themselves abroad after the 1917 Revolution were torn away from their homeland not only politically but also spiritually', he said, pointing to the three jurisdictions that had developed in the diaspora. Only a small part of parishes remained faithful to the Moscow Patriarchate while the other part moved temporarily to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. First the Russian Church Outside Russia was the largest group. It was led by the former Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev. This group established its own Synod and stayed without communion with the Moscow Patriarchate for many decades.

Metropolitan Hilarion stressed that the division was not merely formal, 'the dividing line went through people's families and lives'. 'It used to be so that in one family living in the diaspora, the children went to a church of the Moscow Patriarchate while their parents to a church of the Church Outside Russia. This was a ground for conflicts because the confrontation was rather sharp. There were mutual accusations by both sides: the Moscow Patriarchate dubbed the Church Outside Russia the Karlovtsy Schism while the Church Outside Russia's bishops accused the Moscow Patriarchate of cooperation with the godless authorities – the so-called 'Sergianism', that is, adherence to the policy of Metropolitan Sergius who, in the late 20s, began to strive for the legalization of the Russian Church in the Soviet Union'.

This situation continued till the beginning of the 21st century when the both sides gradually began to come to rapprochement. Visits of the Church Outside Russia's bishops to Russia became more frequent. According to Metropolitan Hilarion, a very important impulse was given to this process by the personal participation of V. V. Putin who personally invited the head of the Church Outside Russia, Metropolitan Laurus, to come to Russia for an official visit. 'After that a negotiation process started in which it became clear very soon that the factors which used to divide us became things of the past. On May 17, 2007, the historic reunification took place, when Patriarch Alexy II and Metropolitan Laurus signed an Act of Canonical Communion', His Eminence Hilarion noted.

'Since that time we have had not merely the Eucharistic communion but also the awareness of belonging to the united multinational Russia Orthodox Church as she actually was before the reunification with the Moscow Patriarchate. And today the Church Outside Russia administratively enjoys very broad rights but stays in devotional, Eucharistic and canonical communion with the Moscow Patriarchate', Metropolitan Hilarion concluded.

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