



Metropolitan Hilarion: the Patriarch of Constantinople claims special privileges akin to those of the pope



On September 16-17, 2021, a conference on the primacy and conciliarity in Orthodoxy took place at the Church of Christ the Saviour. Participants spoke in particular about the consequences of the Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople's actions trampling upon the conciliar structure of the Church and destroying her canonical order.

Answering a question of Ye. Gracheva, presenter of the Church and the World TV talk show, the head of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk stressed, "It seems to me that a truly Orthodox person will never turn away from the Church. It can be done only by one whose religiosity is superficial, who is unable to see behind human reality the reality Divine presence in the Church, who does not feel that the Church is a space in which God lives and works.

The archpastor reminded the audience that the Church consists of those who come to her with their sins, passions and their problems, and the clergy are not free from human sins either, weaknesses and passions. "Sometimes, human weaknesses influence what we call church politics or church geopolitics,

when a particular Local Church begins quarrelling or when a particular person begins appropriating powers he does not have in fact”, the DECR chairman stated.

“In recent years, we have encountered with the Patriarch of Constantinople’s claims to special privileges, special powers in the Orthodox Church, which are akin to the papal powers in the Roman Catholic Church”, the hierarch continued, “But while in the western Catholic tradition there is a papal system of church governance when one person, perceived as vicar of Christ, stands over the whole Church, in our Orthodox tradition we have never had such a thing. The Orthodox Church is the family of Local Churches and their Primates are equal even if there is a special order among them in which they line in celebrating the Divine Liturgy together.

His Eminence reminded the audience that according to the order established until the 11th century, the first one was the bishop of Rome; the second after him was bishop of Constantinople followed by other Primates of Local Churches. After the rupture in communion between the Catholic and Orthodox Christians in 1054, primacy in the family of Eastern Orthodox Church passed naturally to the Patriarch of Constantinople. However, it was and is the primacy of honour, not primacy of power.

“When the Patriarch of Constantinople begins showing authoritative powers, when he declares that he can interfere in the affairs of any Local Church, reshape the boundaries of Churches and unilaterally repeal 300-years-old acts and agreements, the Local Orthodox Churches certainly disagree with it”, Metropolitan Hilarion said pointing out that precisely this was the subject of discussion at the conference on “World Orthodoxy: Primacy and Conciliarity in the Light of Orthodox Teaching”, which took place at the Church of Christ the Saviour.

DECR Communication Service

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