THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus: Position of the Russian Church on the Ukrainian autocephaly is fair and wholly justified

In connection with the fact that on October 24, 2020, His Beatitude Chrysostomos II, Archbishop of New Justiniana and All Cyprus, recognized one of the Ukrainian schismatic communities and with the comments he gave on this occasion to the press, published below is the text of the message of greeting that His Beatitude had sent to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in 2018 on the occasion of the celebrations devoted to the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia.

His Beatitude Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia

Moscow

Your Beatitude,

Our memory continues keeping the indelible impressions of our trip to your great country last December when we magnificently celebrated together with you the centenary of the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Church. We experienced your generous hospitality and could feel the Russian people's love of their Church, as well as their pride for her.

Now today too we become participants in another great joy of celebrating the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia. We personally feel an immense joy because God vouchsafed us to take part in similar festivities devoted to both the millennium and the 1025th anniversary of this unique event. In the memory of peoples, these great events of history tower up as bright beacons, which the people, looking on them with hope, draw inspiration from them, an example, a new moral light and new spiritual resources.

And this year, the Church of Cyprus, in the persons of our representatives, namely, the Most Reverend Metropolitan George of Paphos and Archimandrite Stylianos (Stylianou), take part in these celebrations and wish a blessing of the Lord to the historically younger but numerically larger Russian Church in everything for the glory of God worshipped in the Trinity and for the glory of holy Orthodoxy.

The event celebrated is great indeed! It is such not only for the Russian Church and for the people of God dwelling there but also for the whole Orthodoxy and the whole Church of Christ. Since the Christian truth caught on the good Russian olive-tree, the Russian people have acquired a lasting tie unique in its importance and proved to be capable of great deeds. They have created a new civilization by transmitting the truth to other peoples as well. Being with Christ, the Russian people have realized that history is the fulfillment of divine goals and has the divine predestination: the transfiguration of the world by the life 'in Christ' and the assertion of the Kingdom of God over all. And now this truth has inspired them for their further journey up to this day. However, the celebrated event is also important for the whole Orthodox world. Without the Russian people we as Orthodox would be a small minority amidst other Christians. And if it were not for your glorious and great country, then what defense could we, all the rest, could feel in severe and difficult times? The adoption of Orthodoxy by Rus' has changed the course of history.

The action of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles has made a decisive influence on the destiny of the Russian people. Throughout the Christian universe, his name resounds in a reverential echo. The traces of his actions are indelibly sealed in the hearts of all Russian Orthodox Christians, and his glory shines forth throughout this great country. In him the assertion finds conformation that a vision of the future can be successful only if it comes from persons unique and gifted with resourcefulness and also from the voice and deeds of true leaders. And this action resulted in that the local Church became autocephalous and later acquired the status of Patriarchate. We are aware of the importance of this action and wholly accept a special feeling that the devoted Russian people and their episcopate have for the place of that mass baptism which became the womb that was bearing the Russian Church.

And for this reason the Church of Cyprus will never deviate from her position, which we have set forth for you on many occasions, that is to say, we will use all our resources to support the position of the Russian Orthodox Church on the issue of the so-called autocephaly in Ukraine. She believed this position to be fair and wholly justified. In it are your spiritual roots and you cannot be torn away from them. In this issue, we as Cypriots understand you in a special way, looking at the tomb and monastery of St. Barnabas, the founder of our Church, which are inaccessible for us because of the Turkish invasion. The main reason for which we have hastened to respond to your invitation to attend these events was to assure you again of the invariability of our position.

Your Beatitude, for over a thousand year-old history of your Church, you, naturally, experienced both the days of celebrations and the days of persecutions and went through 'glory and disgrace'. But for the whole Church the periods of sorrows are more frequent. The Church has never said that spiritual life is easy. And Christ, too, warned us that 'narrow is the gate' and 'sorrowful is the path' though leading us to eternity. But for all the difficulties Christ intends to transform the human being, to turn the human from a

mixture of the mortal into the power of resurrection.

And today, in this world of alienation, discord, a world causing oppressiveness, when spiritual insensitivity is spilt around us, history again entrusts the Orthodox Church with a unique role to serve as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, to oppose spiritually certain phenomena of our time, such as globalization, nationalism, technology and achievements in the entertainment industry, to give her spiritual answer, leading the world to salvation in Christ. All together, we are called to respond to this call of history.

Congratulating you once again upon this significant anniversary in the religious life of the devoted Russian people and reasserting the identity of the position of the Church of Cyprus to that of your position on the Ukrainian issue, we remain,

With love in the Lord,

Archbishop Chrysostomos of Cyprus

In the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus, 26 July 2018

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