



## **Metropolitan Onufriy of Kiev and All Ukraine expresses support for the Serbian Church in connection with the situation in Montenegro**

*In the end of 2019, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted a law “On Freedom of Faith and Beliefs and Legal Status of Religious Communities”, whereby all the religious edifices that had been built before 1918, are to be transferred for ownership to the state. The clergy and laity of Montenegro have come out in mass protests.*

*In connection with a dangerous development of the situation around the canonical Orthodox Church in Montenegro, on December 28, an online meeting of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church was held and its members unanimously adopted a Patriarchal and Synodal Message.*

*In addition, as the DECR of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has reported, His Beatitude Onufriy, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine, sent a letter to His Holiness Irenaeus, Patriarch of Serbia, supporting the Serbian Orthodox Church and expressing solidarity with the Orthodox faithful in Montenegro in their trials.*

*Below is the text of the letter.*

Your Holiness,

We were grieved to learn about the discriminatory law adopted on the night from December 26 to 27, 2019, by the Parliament of Montenegro on “Freedom of Faith and Beliefs and the Legal Status of Religious Communities”, which is actually aimed against the dioceses of your Holy Church in Montenegro.

It is a sad fact that the Parliament has ignored the will of an overwhelming majority of the faithful who are against this law. As is known, the Montenegro authorities have also ignored the canonical Church of their country and supported schismatics.

Regrettably, the same happened in the recent past in Ukraine as well, where the position of the schismatics, who are actually a minority in our country, was presented as the voice of the whole

Ukrainian believing people while the voice of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which unites millions of believers, was ignored.

Today, the plenitude of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – the episcopate, clergy and laity – sympathize with your Holy Church and the Orthodox people of Montenegro in a special way. Indeed, our Church, too, endured in the last year the developments known to the entire Orthodox world and similar in many ways to what is now beginning to happen in Montenegro. These are captures of our churches, beatings of the faithful, discriminatory laws against our Ukrainian Orthodox Church and many other things.

Undoubtedly, today's developments in the church life in Montenegro has been a consequence of anti-canonical and forcible actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Ukraine, which were supported by already one-time dominant political authorities of our country. Obviously, in the same way and under the same scenario the Montenegro state authorities, may be not without an outside influence, seek to act in the religious sphere of their country by interfering in church life and supporting schismatics and discriminating the canonical Church.

I would like to assure you, Your Holiness, that in this period so hard for your Church, our Ukrainian Orthodox Church is empathizing, praying and staying by your side and by all the faithful who are united by your Holy Church. Indeed, according to St. Paul, «whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it» (1 Cor. 12:26). I sincerely express my humble prayerful support and fraternal solidarity with all hierarchs, clergy and faithful of Montenegro and especially with His Grace Methodije, Bishop of Diocletian, who has suffered from the actions of local police.

I am praying that the All-Merciful Lord may grant our brothers and sisters – Orthodox Christians of Montenegro, peace, tranquillity and an opportunity to worship without obstruction in their churches and that He may bring to reason and pacify the hearts of those who is rising against His Holy Church.

With love in the Lord,

**+ Onufriy**

**Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine**

**Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**