



Members of Synod of Central Asian metropolitan area send message of support to His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine

On March 19, at the Religious and Administrative Centre of the Tashkent diocese, the Synod of the Central Asian metropolitan area held its first session in 2019 under the chairmanship of Metropolitan Vikenty of Tashkent and Uzbekistan. Taking part in the meeting were also Archbishop Feofilakt of Pyatigorsk and Cherkessk, acting administrator of the Patriarchal deanery of the Russian Orthodox Church's parishes in Turkmenistan; Bishop Pitirim of Dushanbe and Tajikistan; and Bishop Daniel of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan. The Synod members sent a message of support to His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine.

Your Beatitude,

Beloved in the Lord Metropolitan Onufry,

It grieves us greatly to learn about the developments in the life of laity and clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. It brings to mind numerous cases of persecution of the Church of Christ and St. Paul's words, "We were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears" (2 Cor. 7:5).

However, the history of triumph of the Church of Christ over all its persecutors, as well as courageous firmness of the Orthodox people and clergy of Ukraine give hope that these persecutions will also be overcome by firmness in faith, ardent prayer and loving heart of the Orthodox pastors and faithful.

The season of the great and salvific Lent helps us persevere in prayer. Praying together with the brotherly Ukrainian Church, we with all our heart share the pain and sorrow caused by attempts to shatter the blessed unity of the Church. Here, in the countries of Central Asia, the words of the apostle, reminding us that "we, being many, are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5), resonate particularly strongly. The unity with the Mother-Church becomes ever more precious and important.

This unity is needed more than ever for You, Your Beatitude, as the Primate of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church, today when attempts are being made to forcibly draw the Orthodox people of Ukraine into a soul-destroying schism and, therefore, deprive them of the very salvation and life eternal. The Holy Righteous John of Kronstadt exclaims, "Our salvation is in the Church, like in Noah's ark, and

nowhere else. 'But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican' (Mt. 18:17). We are the Church, the body of Christ, and He, Christ, is the Saviour of the body; 'for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones' (Eph. 5:30). The Holy Spirit is the Helmsman of the ship of the word, the Church. It is only in the Church, like in Noah's ark, that one can be saved."

We prayerfully wish to all the clergy and people of the long-suffering canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church to preserve "the spirit of the Lord... the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2). For Christ the Saviour Himself encourages us, saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). The prayers and compassion of all the Orthodox faithful of Central Asia are with you on these days of hardship.

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