Patriarch Irinej of Serbia: Ukrainian problem can divide Orthodox world in the 21st century

On 29 January 2019, after the meeting with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia gave a brief interview.

– Your Holiness, first of all, we would like to ask you about your current visit to Moscow in such a difficult time for the Russian Church. What are your impressions and hopes?

– It is a great honour and joy for us to visit Moscow, especially for such celebrations as the 10th anniversary of enthronement of His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia. It is a momentous event for the Russian people, for the Russian Orthodox Church, greatly important for the Universal Orthodoxy as well.

– What is your attitude to the newly organized "church" in Ukraine and what are the ways to settle the conflict which now seems insoluble?

– It is a great problem not only for the Russian and the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches, but for the whole Orthodox world. This problem has been brought into the Church and will have far-reaching repercussions. We all, Orthodox Christians, should be fully aware of this problem, for it can have the same consequences as the one that arisen in the 11th century. The 11th century problem divided the Church into the Eastern one and the Western one, and this problem in the 21st century can divide the Orthodox world and have serious repercussions.

We should formulate this problem with regard to Constantinople in order to remove it from the agenda. If this problem will not be solved, then, regrettably, we will have to take a concrete position on this issue. It is a blow to the unity of the Orthodox Church and it is the Patriarchate of Constantinople that will more than anyone else be aware of its aftermaths. And it is in Ukraine that we will see painful after-effects of the actions which are being committed today.

We offer fervent prayers, asking the Lord to grant peace unto us and to return unity to the Orthodox world, without which the Church cannot exist. And we must exert every effort to restore this unity.

– Your Holiness, what do you think of the recent decision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to allow a second marriage for priests?

– It surprised us greatly, because this decision runs counter to all the existing canons. Unfortunately, it is a sign of our times and of the temptation that the Church is going through.

– The Serbian Church is also facing difficulties; I mean the Montenegrin shismatics. What do you do to respond to this problem? And is it true that the Serbian priests are being exiled from Montenegro?

– Regrettably, Montenegro betrayed Serbia and chose a wrong path. They repudiate their Serbian name and proclaim themselves Montenegrin, a nation independent from Serbia, a nation that has its own culture, its own language. Regrettably, they also formed their own “independent church.” The head of this “church” is a man who was defrocked and who proclaimed himself metropolitan of Montenegro. And it is from Constantinople that they are awaiting recognition.

Yes, it is true that currently the clergymen and monastics who came to Montenegro from Serbia and carry out their holy mission there are being subjected to persecutions. Regrettably, the Serbians are being exiled from Montenegro.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/46704/