



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: I call upon everyone to pray for peace for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**

On December 21, 2018, the annual Moscow Diocesan Assembly began its work under the chairmanship of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in the Hall of Church Councils of the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in Moscow.

In his report His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia dwelt, among other things, on the ecclesiastical situation in Ukraine.

“It has been a difficult year for the whole Orthodox Church and especially for Orthodox Christians in Ukraine. Even the 1030<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Baptism of Russia – a bright occasion calling to mind the centuries-old unity of our peoples, cherished since the times of the Holy Prince Vladimir, Equal-to-the-Apostles – was used by some politicians and leaders of the schism endorsed by them as an excuse to try to split our Church. What grieves us most is that the Patriarchate of Constantinople supported them in this effort,” His Holiness said.

“While representatives of the Local Orthodox Churches were arriving in Moscow and Kiev to pray and celebrate with us, envoys of Constantinople were occupied with something else. They were communicating with secular leaders and with people, alien to the Orthodox Church,” the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church continued.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill reminded all those present that in September the Throne of Constantinople appointed its “exarchs” in Kiev in gross violation of the ecclesiastical canons. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church gave this act an adequate assessment and resolved to suspend the liturgical commemoration of Patriarch Bartholomew and the con-celebration with hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

“Regrettably, Constantinople’s anti-canonical aggression did not stop at that,” Patriarch Kirill said, “On October 11, the Patriarchate of Constantinople made public the decisions taken by its Synod: to grant autocephaly to the Ukrainian Church despite the fact that it had not requested it; to reinstate the leaders of the Ukrainian schism in their existing ranks, to nullify all canonical impediments placed upon them and restore each and all of them and their followers ‘to communion’; to ‘revoke the legal binding of the Synodal Letter’ concerning the transfer of the Kievan Metropolia to the Moscow Patriarchate, signed 332 years ago; and to establish its Stavropegia in Kiev. While the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople was hypocritically calling upon all sides to ‘avoid appropriation of churches’ and refrain

from violence in the name of 'peace and love,' the pressure exerted upon the bishops, clerics, monastics and laypeople of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church who did not want to be involved in the anti-canonical initiatives of state-mongers and schismatics was intensifying."

As the Primate of the Russian Church reminded the participants in the meeting, the Ukrainian senior public officials often state that the faithful of the canonical Church are aliens, thus denying them the right to live in their own country. "And it affects millions of citizens of Ukraine! In fact, the Synod of Constantinople and its Patriarch sided with the persecutors," His Holiness emphasised.

"I am saying this with deep pain, for it concerns the authorities of the Local Church that was our Mother, the people I used to meet and pray with so many times and together with which I tried to reach understanding on what serves the unity," Patriarch Kirill said.

"Yet, the truth compels us to say that it is not happening for the first time. Let us call to mind the 1920-s and the 1930s, recollect the times of St. Tikhon. The Russian Church was subjected to the atheistic persecutions, and Constantinople did all it could to tear from its living body those parts that were within its reach: Estonia, Finland, Poland, and Latvia. Let us call to mind how Patriarch Gregory VII of Constantinople tried to dethrone St. Tikhon the Confessor, calling upon him to abdicate the Patriarchal throne allegedly for the good and "peace" of the Church, for the sake of the same triumph of "love" which the current successor of Patriarch Gregory is speaking about," His Holiness added.

"We cannot con-celebrate the Sacraments with people who entered into communion with those who fell into schism and were even excommunicated from the Church," Patriarch Kirill noted, "We say 'Christ Is in Our Midst' to those who are now being persecuted in Ukraine, to those brothers with which we feel full solidarity. We admire their courage, humility and spiritual boldness. We pray for them at every Liturgy, we pray for the unity of our Local Church and for the unity of the holy Orthodoxy in the world. But we cannot say the same words, 'Christ Is in Our Midst,' to those who side not with the persecuted but with the persecutors. Therefore, in the current situation, our Holy Synod has made the only possible decision: 'in view of the ongoing anti-canonical actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to consider it impossible to continue the Eucharistic communion with it'."

"In these circumstances, we should find strength in prayer, for the prayer of the Church is a great power. Back in September, the Holy Synod blessed to offer special fervent prayers at the Liturgy for the unity of the holy Orthodoxy in all the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church. And I call upon each of you to lift up fervent, reverent, heartfelt prayer for the unity of the holy Churches of God, for peace for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Offer these supplications not only during the divine services, but also in home prayer, repeat them on pilgrimages, call upon your parishioners to do this, entreat with a heartfelt sighing the hieromartyr of the last times – St. Vladimir the Metropolitan of Kiev, the centenary of whose

murder marked the beginning of this year, that he might take the threat of new sufferings away from the Ukrainian Church,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia said in conclusion.

*Patriarchal Press Service/*

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