Appeal of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to the Archpastors, Pastors, Monastics and Faithful, as of December 17

On December 17, the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has held an extraordinary session at the Kiev-Pechersky Laura of the Dormition. The Synod has adopted the following message to the archpastors, pastors, monastics and faithful:

Your Eminences and Graces,

Beloved in the Lord Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

On December 15, 2018, at the Sophia of Kiev National Preserve, the so-called uniting council was held to declare the establishment of a new church organization called ‘The Orthodox Church’. Its emergence resulted from the unification of the two uncanonical structures: ‘The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church’ and ‘The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate’.

Thus, this gathering represents a union of schismatics and has nothing to do with the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. For our Church, nothing has changed as the schismatics have remained in schism while the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has remained the true Church of Christ in Ukraine. Nobody in the world questions the validity of the episcopal and priestly ordinations of the clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the gracefulness of the Sacraments celebrated in our Church – the fact that cannot be said of the newly created structure.

We inform you with grief that the Holy Synod has had to relieve the Most Rev. Metropolitan Simeon of Vinnitsa and Bar of the administration over the diocese and to suspend the Most. Rev. Metropolitan Alexander of Pereyaslav-Khmelnitsky and Vishnev from his ministry. We call upon all of you, dear Eminences and Graces, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters, to pray for the above-mentioned persons and those who have diverted to the schism that they may come to reason and return to the bosom of the Church. Our Church, like a loving Mother, with hope awaits their return.

Pitifully, among the initiators of today’s trials of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which argues for its right to interfere in our church affairs by asserting that our Church was once in its jurisdiction. In this connection, we would like to remind you that the Russian Orthodox Church had to declare its autocephaly because of the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s betrayal of the

Orthodox faith by singing union with Rome at the Ferrara-Florence Council in 1439. This spiritual betrayal of the Orthodox faith became the principal reason for the Metropolis of Kiev, too, to separate itself from Constantinople. The *unia* caused a break in the church relations and distrust to aggravate later by the fact that for centuries the Church of Constantinople failed to provide appropriate pastoral care and help in the gravest times of trial for Orthodoxy in our lands. Exhausted by the religious confrontation with the Uniates, devastated by wars, especially after the 1596 Union of Brest, the Metropolis of Kiev joined the Russian Orthodox Church in the late 17th century with the aim to preserve the Orthodox faith. That is why today the Patriarchate of Constantinople has no moral and canonical rights to interfere in the internal affairs and spiritual life of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Moreover, the actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople have already led to the situation in which the possibility for unity of the Orthodox in Ukraine has been thrown away for long, if not forever.

Dear Bishops, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters! We appeal to you with love to preserve also in future the purity of the holy Orthodox faith, to cherish the spiritual unity in our holy Ukrainian Church, the canonical heiress of the old Metropolis of Kiev, which appeared through the intercession of St. Andrew the First-Called and efforts of the Holy Prince Vladimir Equal-to-the-Apostles and in which our glorious ancestors lived and pleased God.

We thank the hierarchs, clergy, monastics and all the laity who have withstood pressure in these hard times and re-affirmed their faithfulness to the holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church. ‘Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown’ (Rev. 2:10), as Holy Scriptures teaches us.

We call upon all the faithful children of our Church to pray for those who, without the awareness of it, hate us and our Church. May the Lord forgive them. And love your Church, love our Motherland Ukraine and do everything possible so that in our land and among our people there may be peace, patience, harmony and genuine Christian love.

On behalf of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church,

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Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine

Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

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