



Patriarch Kirill: There is no conflict between Constantinople and Moscow but there is Moscow's defence of inviolable canonical norms

On October 28, 2018, His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, presided over the Divine Liturgy at the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted (the Transfiguration of the Lord) in Bolshaya Ordynka, Moscow.

The service was followed by a common meal during which the Primate made a speech about the spiritual unity of the people in the pastoral care of the Russian Orthodox Church and about the disorders in the world Orthodoxy brought about by unfriendly actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

'I had very warm and good remembrances of my visit to Byelorussia and of conducting the Holy Synod in Minsk, I came back elated. Indeed, we are united spiritually and canonically and the episcopate, clergy and faithful of the Byelorussian Orthodox Church are fostered in this idea of this canonical unity', His Holiness said about this recent visit to the Republic of Belarus.

Addressing the situation in Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill expressed a conviction that this country has become 'a field of strife' under the influence of external forces. 'Too great geopolitical and financial forces have been put in motion in Ukraine today in order to tear to pieces the historical space of Holy Rus', the Primate stressed, 'And for this reason I am especially grateful to the episcopate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who have remained faithful, cherishing unity and preaching that which corresponds to the historical truth'.

'Properly speaking, the Church in Ukraine continues doing what we all did in the Soviet time. The whole ideology worked against us but we kept proclaiming the truth of Christ. We did so not to provoke the powerful authorities but we did speak out', His Holiness added.

He stated that the unity of the Church has nothing to do with the imperial system of governance, but it is a visible confirmation of the spiritual, intellectual and civilizational unity of the peoples of historical Rus'. According to His Holiness, old chroniclers used to call their country 'Rus', 'the Russian land', without dividing it into Ukraine, Byelorussia or Great Russia, and 'we all are heirs of the Rosses, as the Byzantines used to call our ancestors, whatever they may say today, whatever absurd historisophic ideas may be thrown today into the public awareness'.

‘We are really a one people, and I am never afraid of speaking about it. We have different dialects, different cultural peculiarities but we are a one people originating from the Kiev baptismal font. And may God grant that the Moscow Patriarchate, which unites us not on the political level, not on the economic, but the spiritual level, might be preserved to take pastoral care of all the ethnoses united in the great historical Rus’, the Primate said.

‘As far as the recent actions of Constantinople are concerned, I would like to underscore: there is no conflict whatsoever between Constantinople and Moscow! There is Moscow’s defense of the inviolable canonical norms’, His Holiness stated, ‘If one of the Churches supports the schismatics, if one of the Churches violates canons, then she ceases to be an Orthodox Church. Therefore, the position of the Russian Orthodox Church today, which has stopped the liturgical mention of the Patriarch of Constantinople, has to do not only with the relationships between the two Patriarchs – the point is the very nature of the Orthodox Church’.

‘In due course, I discussed the issue of the primacy of Constantinople with Father Alexander Schmemmann, a famous Russian and American theologian. And he said the wise words: ‘If we need a Pope so much, then we should turn to the one who has the greatest experience’, in the sense that by no means to the Patriarch of Constantinople. But we do not need a Pope! It is our deep conviction that the conciliar governance of the Church is the only right way. And if somebody is interfering now in the jurisdiction of other Churches, then he violates all the canons, and the only response to these shameless violations is our calm answer: we will no longer share communion with you because you have violated canons; you have departed from Orthodoxy. Let God be your judge – and God will be the judge’, the Patriarch stressed.

‘We are experiencing an historic moment that can be compared to the time of the *unia* of Ferrara-Florence. At that time, Metropolitan Isidore of Kiev, Moscow and All Rus’, having betrayed Orthodoxy, came to consider himself to be on the top of power and the one who would subject everybody to the See of Rome. But he was banished by the great prince, clergy and people’, His Holiness reminded the gathering, ‘This resistance of our people, our clergy, our episcopate, to every mean trick, to every heresy, to every schism is a guarantee of the preservation of Orthodoxy on the world scale, a guarantee of the preservation of our unity’.

‘I am glad that the latest decisions of the Supreme Authority have been met with absolute understanding of our believing people, episcopate and clergy. Of course, the Patriarch is going through a hard time. But the whole of our Russian Orthodox Church, the whole world Orthodoxy is going through a hard time, indeed. For this reason, I ask you to preserve the unity and pray for the Russian Church and for the whole Orthodoxy’, His Holiness Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, concluded.

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