Statement of the Holy Synod of Antioch Concerning the Current Developments in the Orthodox World

The Holy Synod of Antioch met in the Our Lady of Balamand Patriarchal Monastery, Lebanon, (October 3-6, 2018) and made the following statement:

The fathers examined the general orthodox situation. They stressed that the Church of Antioch expresses Her deep worries about the attempts to change the boundaries of the Orthodox Churches through a new reading of history. She considers that resorting to an unilateral reading of history does not serve Orthodox unity. It rather contributes to the fueling of the dissentions and quarrels within the one church. Thus, the Church of Antioch refuses the principle of establishing parallel jurisdictions within the canonical boundaries of the Patriarchates and the autocephalous churches, as a way to solve conflicts, or as a de facto situation in the Orthodox World.

The fathers of the Church of Antioch underline that any approach for granting the autocephaly of a certain church has to be in accordance with the Orthodox ecclesiology and the principles agreed upon by the Churches in a conciliar way in the past years. These principles for granting autocephaly are about the necessity to obtain the agreement of the Mother Church and the acknowledgement of all the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches. The Church of Antioch affirms the necessity to resort to the principle of unanimity concerning the common orthodox work and the stand on controversial issues in the Orthodox world, and this unanimity is a true safeguard for Orthodox Unity.

The Church of Antioch warns from the dangers of implicating the Orthodox world in the international political conflicts and the resulting harms which come from approaching the Orthodox Church’s issues on the basis of politics, ethnicity, and nationalism.

The Church of Antioch calls upon His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch to call for an urgent Synaxis for the primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches, in order to discuss the current developments that the Orthodox world is facing about the issue of granting autocephaly to new churches, and the efforts made to find common solutions before taking any final decisions about this issue.

The Church of Antioch highlights the necessity of spiritual vigilance in this critical period of history, and the importance of preserving the peace and unity of the Church, and to be watchful on not falling into the trap of political entanglement which history has proved to cause the Orthodox Church a weakening of Her united witness in the world.

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