Statement by Metropolitan Seraphim of Kythira and Antikythera (Greek Orthodox Church) on uncanonical actions of Patriarch of Constantinople in Ukraine

I have been deeply saddened when I heard about the breakup of church communion between the Moscow and Ecumenical Patriarchates. These sad and deplorable results have been caused by the Ecumenical Patriarchate's persistence over the problem of granting autocephaly to the Ukrainian schismatics, who have separated themselves from our holy Orthodox Church, that is, from all the Orthodox Patriarchs and Local Autocephalous Orthodox Churches and who represent an overwhelming minority of the Ukrainian people.

Until recently, the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognised as canonical only the Ukrainian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Onufriy, but now it, for its own reasons, is to grant autocephaly to Ukrainian schismatics, thus ignoring the canonical order and the canonical Orthodox Ukrainian archdiocese recognized not only by the Russian Orthodox Churches but also by all the rest of Local Orthodox Churches.

The schismatics, as is known, are not a Church and it is forbidden by divine and holy canons and the Apostolic and Ecumenical Councils to be in communion with them. Why then this persistence and stubbornness of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in recognizing the schismatics as an autocephalous Church? Is it to cause schisms and divisions in the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ? Were not there enough emotions and troubles caused by the decisions of the so-called Holy and Great Council in Crete (June 2016), especially by naming non-Orthodox Christian confessions and communities as Churches?

And by its recent decision to allow a second marriage to the clergy under certain conditions, did not the Patriarch of Constantinople's Synod ignore the so-called Holy and Great Council itself? Was it not stated In Par. 4 of the section on 'Obstacles to Marriage' in the final document of this council (of Crete, 2016 – *ed.*) that 'priesthood in itself is not an obstacle to marriage, but, according to the canonical tradition in force (Fifth-Sixth Council of Trullo Canon 3), after consecration it is forbidden to enter upon marriage'?

From a remote corner of our homeland, Greece, from the adjacent region of Kythira and Antikythera further south, I ardently and heartily appeal to First-Throned Patriarch of our Orthodox Church,

Bartholomew, to stop his course so that new schisms and divisions of the All-Holy Body of Christ and our Most Holy Orthodox Church may be avoided.

Instead of common prayers he has had of late with the Pope of Rome and leaders and representatives of non-Orthodox confessions and communities and even the non-Christians, which are not only useless but also creating a great temptation among the Orthodox Christian plenitude, the Patriarch should have preached repentance and return of the entire Orthodox Christian world to the faith once handed over by saints, to the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Apostles, the honorable and God-bearing fathers, to the Ecumenical Councils of our Church and to our Orthodox tradition as a whole.

From my heart I wish wisdom and vigilance to all the spiritual leaders of our Church so that the coming spiritual crisis may be stopped thus avoiding painful consequences for the unity of the most holy Orthodox flock of Christ. Because everybody knows the saying of St. John Chrysostom that ‘the sin of schism cannot be washed out even by the blood of martyrdom’.

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