Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev: Our Church has all attributes of independence

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has everything necessary for carrying out its service to God and to people, His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine said in his exclusive interview for Morning on Inter TV programme.

- These days we are being pulled into a format of political party, so that our leader would not be Christ, but one of the politicians. Had I wanted to be a politician, I would have been one. I would not wear such vestments but would go into politics. I had such chances when I was young, but gave them up. Having put on spiritual garments, I must think about and be concerned over spiritual matters. And those who put on cassocks and are effectively engaged in politics, developing some geopolitical plans, are simply dishonest people who failed to be real clergymen and instead turned into some kind of shape-shifters in order to attract people's attention by their spiritual guise. This is dishonest. And it will be hard for them to answer before God.

We are an independent Church. We have all the attributes of independence that we need today to serve God and people.

We have our own Synod, independent of anyone. We have our own Bishops' Council, independent of anyone, and the decisions of our Council are also independent – nobody can veto them. We have an ecclesiastical court, which is the highest instance. We have everything of our own: the economic, the administrative independence... The Tomos would restrict the freedom we enjoy today. We do not need that. We have independence, self-governess, all the attributes of free life, necessary for our Church to successfully carry out its spiritual service to people.

It is good that we have spiritual, prayerful, canonical and cultural ties with the Moscow Patriarchate. It is as it should be. The Church is not a political organization which today loves one and hates the other, and tomorrow it will be the opposite. The Church loves everybody. We love everybody – Moscow, the Russian people, Americans, Africans, Asians – everybody. We do not have any enemies. We only have adversaries who are acting against us, but they are not our enemies. We pray for them.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople has sent its two exarchs to Ukraine. It is an uncanonical action. The Patriarchate of Constantinople has no right to send its legates, its exarchs, to our independent Church.

The Church of Constantinople used to be a powerful Church that embraced the whole civilized world. It

identified itself with the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantine Empire encompassed almost the whole world, and the Church was equivalent to it. Yet, there is no Byzantine Empire today. They are living in the past. Instead of that big country, the Byzantium, now there is Turkey, wherein there is even no Orthodox faith. The Orthodox Christians there can now be counted on the fingers of one hand. They have driven their homeland into such a state that the country which used to be a powerful Orthodox state has turned into a Muslim state. And do they want to order us about today, to teach us how we should live?

Do they want to drive our Ukraine into the same state as their homeland? They have neither moral, nor canonical right to appoint its exarchs here and to interfere in our affairs.

An interference in the affairs of another Church constitutes an anti-church, anti-canonical action; it is a sin. And sin leads to divisions among people. This sin of interference in the affairs of our Church can bring about the schism of global scale.

The Church cannot live in accordance with the worldly standards, for the worldly life, especially in politics, is full of intrigues, deceit, betrayal... all kinds of evil. The Church cannot base its life on such norms. It lives in accordance with Christ's commandments. We have our own methods of fighting against evil. These are repentance, patience, humility before each other and before God. These are the strong weapons destroying evil.

A priest is called to be a peacemaker, not a politician dividing people. The ideology that is being propagated today is not the ideology of God. The ideology that is being spread in our society nowadays is becoming an anti-Christian one. The legitimization of same-sex marriages, abortions, suicides, etc. – all this is the opposite of Christ. God does not bless people to do that. The Church carries out its mission by leading man to God, be reminding people that we are all God's creations and that God calls upon all of us to love each other, to be patient to each other and to help each other.

I know that our Church will stand until the end of the world, because the Lord said that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

I would like to appeal to all the faithful of our Church. Fear nothing; be firm in your love for God; preserve purity of the holy Orthodox faith, for it is the path leading man to God; love each other; be patient to each other; and help each other.

Evil will pass away, but good will live forever. If we endure everything and live in love for each other, then evil will not defeat us. God is the God of power, and evil has no power. Let us abide with God and be joyful, happy and blessed.

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