



Statement of the Synod of the Belarusian Orthodox Church (Belarusian Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate) issued on 11 September 2018

In view of the uncanonical interference of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in the internal affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, the Synod of the Belarusian Orthodox Church decided to:

1. Unanimously support the position of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, expressed in the official Statement of 8 September 2018, issued in response to the appointment of two hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople – Archbishop Daniel of Pamphilon and Bishop Ilarion of Edmonton – as “exarchs” of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the city of Kiev;
2. Express protest against these actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as they constitute an aggressive interference of one Local Church in the internal affairs of another Local Church and are aimed at undermining the foundations of inter-Orthodox peace and unity;
3. Call upon the clergy and the flock of the Belarusian Exarchate to lift up fervent prayers unto the Lord for the soonest healing and settlement of the current situation, for bringing to reason and repentance those provoking church discords and schisms, as well as for the wellbeing of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the establishment of peace in the land of Ukraine;
4. Express full support to His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine – the canonical Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, as well as to the archpastors, clergy and pious laypeople – the children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church;
5. Bear witness to the indissoluble spiritual unity of the Orthodox Christians of the brotherly nations of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine – the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church that takes care of the historical Rus’, spiritually born in the Baptismal Font in Kiev;
6. Express hope for God’s help in the peaceful settlement of the current difficult situation, so that the unity of the world Orthodoxy may be preserved.

Note:

In April 2018 President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko appealed to His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople with a request to grant the Tomos of Autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. The request was supported by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and hierarchs of the unrecognized “Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate” and “Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church.” On April 22, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate officially admitted the appeal for consideration.

At the same time, the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church led by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine introduced no initiatives to be granted autocephaly. In its Message to the Bishops, Clergy, Monastics and Laity, issued on May 25, the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

stated: "The autocephalous status is of a solely technical ecclesial nature which lies in promoting the preaching of the Gospel in the territory of a particular state and it cannot be an instrument in geopolitical struggle. At the same time, the autocephalous status is granted to the whole Church within a certain territory. In this connection, it is necessary to realize that the emergence of another parallel jurisdiction in Ukraine may generate new confrontations among our people, which will not only threaten the security of the state but also question the possibility for a future unity of the Church in Ukraine. Our people can be divided for long, if not forever."

Later, the Patriarchate of Constantinople made some statements demonstrating its intention to grant the autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine on a unilateral basis. The message of Patriarch Bartholomew on the occasion of the 1030th anniversary of the Baptism of Russia says, in particular, that the Church of Constantinople "took an initiative to restore the unity of the Orthodox believers in Ukraine with the ultimate goal of granting the autocephaly to the Ukrainian church." On July 1, in his homily at the requiem service marking the 40th day since the death of Metropolitan Evangelos of Perga, Patriarch Bartholomew expressed his claims on the lands of the historical Kiev Metropolia, saying: "Constantinople never ceded the territory of Ukraine to anyone by means of some ecclesiastical Act, but only granted to the Patriarch of Moscow the right of ordination or transfer of the Metropolitan of Kiev on the condition that the Metropolitan of Kiev should be elected by a Clergy-Laity Congress and commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch."

On September 7, the Chief Secretariat of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople published a communiqué concerning the appointment of two hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Constantinople – Archbishop Daniel of Pamphilon (USA) and Bishop Ilarion of Edmonton (Canada) – as "exarchs" of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Kiev.

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed its resolute protest against these actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. "This decision has been adopted without an agreement with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine and has constituted a gross violation of the church canons prohibiting bishops of one Local Church to interfere in the internal life and affairs of another Local Church (Second Ecumenical Council Canon 2; Council of Trullo Canon 20; Council of Antioch Canon 13; and Council of Sardica Canons 3, 11 and 12)," the Holy Synod emphasizes in its Statement issued on September 8.

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