



## **His Holiness Patriarch Kirill: Peacemaking heroic deeds of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church show its true patriotism**

“For almost four years, the whole Russian Orthodox Church has been lifting up to the Altar of God the Almighty its ardent prayers for the cessation of the bloody confrontation in the territory of Ukraine,” His Holiness Patriarch Kirill said in his address at the Bishops’ Council of 2017.

“His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry, bishops, clergy and all the faithful children of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are in real need of our fervent prayers,” His Holiness continued, “The developments of recent years have proved that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church remains the only power that can unite the Ukrainian society. The courageous and balanced position of its supreme authorities, which do not let draw the Church into the conflict on any of its sides, brings forth good fruit.”

According to Patriarch Kirill, fruitful are the efforts of the Church aimed at releasing people from captivity and rendering considerable humanitarian aid to the civilian population of the Donbass, affected by the hostilities. “The peacemaking heroic deeds of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church show its love for Ukraine, its true patriotism,” His Holiness added.

“Despite all this, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is experiencing growing pressure by non-canonical religious groups, radical political forces and non-governmental organizations in Ukraine. A media campaign is being waged against the Church. Illegal seizures of churches continue, with its parishioners being driven away; court decisions in favour of the aggrieved communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are not implemented, and the authorities often give support to the capturers,” His Holiness said.

Attempts made by certain political forces to interfere in the internal life of the Church, to hamper its communities’ registration, and to formalize the religious discrimination at the legislative level cause particular concern. The Patriarch reminded all those present that he had expressed his concern over this matter in his appeal to the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, Pope Francis, the UN Secretary-General, leaders of the Normandy Four states, and the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. “Most of the Primates of the fraternal Local Orthodox Churches expressed their support to the canonical Church in Ukraine, as well as their concern over the expected adoption of these bills,” Patriarch Kirill added, “Among those who raised their voice were also representatives of the largest religious confessions in Ukraine and international religious and human rights organizations.”

“Retaining its numerous flock in all regions of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church proves that its truly the Church of its people, its country. It reveals the fortitude of its archpastors and pastors and piety and solidarity of its faithful, as was witnessed by the unprecedented All-Ukrainian Procession with the Cross in July 2016, that united hundreds of thousands of believers throughout Ukraine, as well as by the thousands-strong Procession with the Cross in Kiev on 27 July 2017,” His Holiness noted.

“Any attempts to undermine the unity of the canonical Church in Ukraine by political methods are doomed to fail while its faithful stay with their Church and are willing to express their love and support to it. And we, the plenitude of the Russian Church, join our ardent prayers for the strengthening of our Orthodox brothers and sisters in Ukraine in their heroic deeds of faith and godliness, as well as for the multiplying of love and eradication of enmity and for the restoration of peace and prosperity in the long-suffering Ukrainian land,” the Primate of the Russian Church added.

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