His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine urges deputies of Verkhovna Rada to prevent the adoption of anti-church bills

The Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church addressed the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in connection with the consideration of bills Nos 4128 and 4511 planned for 18 May 2017. The text reads as follows:

Dear chosen representatives of the people:

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has always come forward for the preservation of peace both in our Ukrainian state and among all nations. All ordained ministers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in their sermons have been calling to Christian love and fulfillment of God's commandments, to mutual understanding and respect. These truths are abiding and eternal as eternal are Christ's words in the Holy Gospel. Yet the enemy of the human race has always been trying to shove off the children of God from the right road and denigrate the Church by concocting new methods of struggle which would correspond with the so called needs of modern times.

Having survived the horrible theomachist time of the atheist authority we thought that we can breathe freely, that nobody will ever persecute anybody for going to church and that intimidation and violence cease to exist. However, the whole Orthodox world is in turmoil now because of the actions of certain politicians who are trying to artificially make the Ukrainian Orthodox Church alien to the Ukrainian society, while this Church is the Church of the Ukrainian people and unites the separated East and West, North and South of our country.

Dear deputies! You are planning to consider bills Nos 4511 and 4128, the negative responses to which were given by experts, religious studies scholars, politicians and many caring Ukrainians, but the most valid assessment was given by those whom these bills concern directly – the Orthodox Ukrainians, who do not agree with the proposed changes. Over 3000.000 citizens of Ukraine have addressed you, their representatives, with the request not to adopt these bills. Hundreds of thousands of believers gathered today at the building of the Verkhovna Rada. They are offering up prayers asking you to heed the voice of the Church. Such vigils are taking place throughout Ukraine.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has many times noted the dangerous nature of these bills which are not only anti-church, but also anti-state and anti-popular. Their adoption may bring about religious enmity,

discrimination and violation of the freedom of conscience and religious belief. The implementation of these bills will open doors to a religious war and mark a negative imprint upon Ukraine on the international arena.

During all the years of Ukraine's independence we have painstakingly, with tears and sweat, have been trying to build the interconfessional peace, restore the ruined churches and – what is most important – revive the broken human souls. Today, by the will of certain politicians the wicked work of the atheist theomachist authorities may be reintroduced and continued.

Our dear deputies! Once again we request you to prevent the adoption of changes stipulated in bills Nos 4128 and 4511. We pray to the Merciful God to grant you wisdom, reasonableness, Christian understanding and love when you will take decisions with far-reaching consequences for our Ukrainian state.

+ ONUFRY

Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine

Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church

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