THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Primacy and Synodality from an Orthodox Perspective

Paper presented at St Vladimir's Theological Seminary on 8 November 2014 on the occasion of conferring an honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity

Your Beatitude,

Your Eminences and Graces,

dear fathers, brothers and sisters,

distinguished guests!

First of all I would like to express my profound gratitude to St Vladimir's Theological Seminary for awarding me the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. It has been a great privilege for me to have been a friend of the Seminary for many years, to have known its deans and chancellors, beginning with Fr John Meyendorff of blessed memory, to having had my books published by the Seminary press and to have served on the Seminary's board. At a time when relations between Russia and America are once again strained, I find it particularly important to develop strong relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and American Orthodoxy. I believe that St Vladimir's Seminary with its broad inter-Orthodox outreach may play a crucial role in the restoration of trust between different parts of the globe.

Today I would like to speak on the issue of synodality and primacy. This topic has acquired particular importance in recent years owing to the work of the International Joint Commission on the Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. This matter is also relevant to Inter-Orthodox relations, especially in the context of preparations for the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church. More particularly, it is relevant because of the way that primacy is exercised currently in the Orthodox Church at the universal level, whereby hierarchs and theologians from the Orthodox Church in America participate neither in the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue nor in the preparations for the pan-Orthodox Council.

Let me begin with clarifying the meaning of the terms. The term synodality, or conciliarity, is a translation of the Russian *sobornost'*, itself coined by nineteenth-century Slavophiles such as Kireevsky and

Khomyakov to designate the communion of all believers throughout the globe within the bosom of one Church. This communion included both the living and the dead. According to Kireevsky, 'the sum total of all Christians of all ages, past and present, comprise one indivisible, eternal living assembly of the faithful, held together just as much by the unity of consciousness as through the communion of prayer'.**[1]**

In a more narrow sense the term synodality, or conciliarity, coming from the word 'council' (*synodos* in Greek, *concilium* in Latin) designates 'a gathering of bishops exercising a particular responsibility'. This is how the controversial Ravenna statement of the Joint Commission on the Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue interprets the term.**[2]** The document claims that the 'conciliar dimension of the Church's life belongs to its deep-seated nature', and that this dimension 'is to be found at the three levels of ecclesial communion, the local, the regional and the universal: at the local level of the diocese entrusted to the bishop; at the regional level of a group of local Churches with their bishops who "recognize who is the first amongst themselves" (Apostolic Canon 34); and at the universal level, where those who are first (*protoi*) in the various regions, together with all the bishops, cooperate in that which concerns the totality of the Church. At this level also, the *protoi* must recognize who is the first amongst themselves'.**[3]**

The term primacy in this context points to leadership of one person, who has a hierarchical rank at each of the three levels mentioned above. The Ravenna statement claims that primacy and conciliarity are mutually interdependent.**[4]** According to the document, 'In the history of the East and of the West, at least until the ninth century, a series of prerogatives was recognized, always in the context of conciliarity, according to the conditions of the times, for the *protos* or *kephale* at each of the established ecclesiastical levels: locally, for the bishop as *protos* of his diocese with regard to his presbyters and people; regionally, for the *protos* of each metropolis with regard to the bishops of his province, and for the *protos* of each of the five patriarchates, with regard to the metropolitans of each circumscription; and universally, for the bishop of Rome as *protos* among the patriarchs.'**[5]**

The Ravenna document makes no mention of any differences in ecclesiology between the Orthodox and the Catholics; in this way it is misleading. Having spoken about the way the Church is administratively organized in the Western and in the Eastern traditions, the document nowhere mentions that we are dealing with two very different models of church administration: one centralized and based on the perception of papal universal jurisdiction; the other decentralized and based on the notion of the communion of autocephalous local Churches.

There is an attempt in the Ravenna document to present the ecclesial structures of both traditions as almost identical at all three levels. While there is a great deal of similarity with regard to the local (diocesan) level, there is indeed an enormous difference between East and West on how ecclesial structures are formed on regional and universal levels. In the Orthodox tradition at the regional level, or

rather at the level of an autocephalous Church, there is a synod and a primate with clear prerogatives. In the Catholic Church there is no primacy at the regional level. Who, for example, is the primate of the Catholic Church in Poland? Is it the metropolitan of Gniezno, who has an honorary title of 'primate' but exercises no primacy at all? Or is it the president of the Bishops' Conference, who changes by rotation every four years? Or is it one of the senior cardinals? Indeed, Catholic episcopal conferences that have convened recently can only very loosely be compared with the Synods of the Local Orthodox Churches.

There is in fact only one primacy in the Catholic Church, that of the pope. This primacy is believed to be instituted *jure divino* and to proceed directly from the primacy of St Peter in the college of the apostles. It is the pope who confirms the decisions of councils, both regional and universal, who gives agreement to each episcopal appointment, and who embodies the fullness of ecclesial power. No such primacy has ever existed in the Orthodox tradition, even though there is an established *taxis*, whereby one of the primates enjoys first place.

None of these obvious differences is mentioned in the Ravenna statement, which was adopted in 2007 without consensus and in the absence of the delegation of the Russian Orthodox Church. The document ignored criticism voiced by the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in the dialogue during the drafting process. After Ravenna, the Joint Commission for the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue continued to explore the subject of primacy and synodality at its plenary meetings in Vienna in 2010 and in Amman in 2014, as well as at several meetings of coordinating and drafting committees between 2008 and 2013. Having worked on the matter for seven years, the Commission still has not been able to produce any document that satisfies all members.

The Commission attempted to approach the issue of primacy from both historical and theological perspectives. In particular, an attempt was made to put the issue of primacy in the context of Trinitarian theology. It was argued that the Holy Trinity is an image of both primacy and conciliarity, since there is in it the monarchy of God the Father, but also the communion of the three divine Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some theologians went so far as to insist that there is 'hierarchy' among the three Persons, having found support in passages from St Basil the Great who speaks of a *taxis* (order) in the Trinity. It was claimed that this ordering, or hierarchy, should be reflected in the administrative structure of the Church at the three levels: local, regional, and universal.

With respect to the local level, a reference to St Ignatius of Antioch was made which ostensibly confirms these ideas. It was the famous passage: 'See that you all follow the **bishop**, even as **Jesus Christ** does the **Father**, and the **presbytery** as you would the **apostles**; and reverence the **deacons**, as being the institution of **God**.'**[6]** Here the diocesan bishop is compared with God the Father, and the faithful are called to be obedient to him in the same way as Jesus was obedient to His Father. The argument of St Ignatius, however, was clearly not from the realm of theological speculation, nor did Ignatius attempt to

project a trinitarian model on church administration at the diocesan level (there is no mention of the Holy Spirit here). He was rather concerned about the issue of ecclesiastical order, insisting on the central place of the bishop in the whole constituency of a local church.

The trinitarian comparison is even less convincing when we move from the diocesan level to what the Ravenna statement calls the ‘regional level’ (a grouping of the dioceses under one metropolitan or patriarch). The interaction between the metropolitan (or patriarch) and his fellow bishops is described in Apostolic canon 34: 'The bishops of each province (*ethnos*) must recognize the one who is first (*protos*) amongst them, and consider him to be their head (*kephale*), and not do anything important without his consent (*gnome*); each bishop may only do what concerns his own diocese (*paroikia*) and its dependent territories. But the first (*protos*) cannot do anything without the consent of all. For in this way concord (*homonoia*) will prevail, and God will be praised through the Lord in the Holy Spirit.'

Some argued, on the basis of this trinitarian glorification, that the administrative structure of the Church on the regional level also reflects (or should reflect) the communion between the divine Persons of the Trinity. The text of the canon, however, does not in fact permit such a comparison: rather, it is the 'consent', or harmony, that reigns between the three Hypostases of the Trinity which is cited here as an example which the bishops on the regional level should follow. With regard to the trinitarian glorification itself, it is similar to many such glorifications that conclude canonical, dogmatic and liturgical texts, and was certainly not meant to draw any direct comparison between the Hypostases of the Holy Trinity and the ranks in church order.

In the fifteenth century the great monastic reformer, St Sergius of Radonezh, dedicated his monastery to the Holy Trinity, using the communion of the three divine Hypostases as a model of unity and concord for his monastic brotherhood. One of Sergius's disciples, St Andrew Roublev, painted a famous icon which became a classic example of the iconographic incarnation of an important moral and theological notion. Unlike most others, this one does not refer to any liturgical commemoration. It follows the traditional pattern known from early antiquity (notably from the fifth-century Ravenna mosaics), according to which the three strangers that appeared to Abraham symbolized the Holy Trinity. The strangers are presented in the form of angels, of whom one is always in the middle.

In earlier iconography, the angel sitting in the middle was usually identified with God the Son, while the other two persons on the icon were interpreted as angels who accompany him. In Roublev's icon the central figure is also most likely to be identified with God the Son, but the other two figures seem to represent the other two Persons of the Trinity. Contemporary scholarship differs in its interpretation of the middle figure: some tend to identify it with the Father, on the assumption that the First Person of the Trinity should occupy central place in the composition.

It seems to me that St Andrew was deliberately 'unclear' about who represents whom, and which figure should be identified with which Person of the Trinity. His icon in a most astounding way describes the mystery of tri-unity without going into further details. It is the concord of the Persons of the Holy Trinity that is portrayed in this beautiful icon rather than the 'structure' of the Triune God, Who undeniably has no structure or subdivisions within Himself, being simple and undivided.

The synodality or conciliarity that exists in the Church and has its particular expression in the institution of synods or councils may indeed be compared with the harmony and concord reigning among the Persons of the Trinity. One should not, however, go any further than that by attempting to compare human ecclesial structures with the divine Trinitarian communion. Neither is it appropriate to interpret interrelationships between primacy and synodality in the Church by using Trinitarian analogies and, thereby, to refer to the 'primacy' of the Father with regard to the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Ravenna statement speaks about the three levels of church administration, somewhat implying that what is true about one level can automatically be transferred to another level. This, however, is highly disputable. It was precisely the confusion between the three levels of church administration in the Ravenna paper, and an attempt to transfer arguments relative to one level onto another, that prompted the Synodal Biblical and Theological Commission of the Moscow Patriarchate to undertake a thorough study of the subject of primacy in the Universal Church. As a result of this study, a document was produced and adopted by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on 26 December 2013.**[7]**

At the outset, the document indicates that primacy at each of the three levels of the Church has different sources. The source of primacy of a bishop in his diocese is the apostolic succession handed down through episcopal consecration. The source of primacy on the level of the regional groupings of dioceses is 'the election of the pre-eminent bishop by a Council (or a Synod) that enjoys the fullness of ecclesiastical power.' At the universal level there is a primacy of honor which is based on the sacred diptychs, i.e. the official order of churches established by Ecumenical Councils.**[8]**

Secondly, the Moscow document indicates that, at the three levels of the Church, primacy is of a different nature. The primacy of the diocesan bishop is clearly based on fundamental theological principles, such as the one famously emphasized by St Cyprian: 'The bishop is in the church and the church is in the bishop and that if somebody is not with the bishop, he is not in the church.'**[9]** Primacy at the regional level, a matter of canonical convenience, is based on church canons, notably on the 34th Apostolic Canon cited above. As for 'universal primacy', there is neither canon nor patristic statement that would describe such a primacy,**[10]**other than the canons that establish a *taxis* (order) for the five major patriarchates. This *taxis* implies that one would be first but gives no indication of his prerogatives over and above the remaining four patriarchs.

It is on the basis of these considerations that the Moscow document insists on 'the functions of the primus on various levels are not identical and cannot be transferred from one level to another.' The document explains that 'to transfer the functions of the ministry of primacy from the level of an eparchy to the universal level means to recognize a special form of ministry, notably, that of a "universal hierarch" possessing the magisterial and administrative power in the whole Universal Church. By eliminating the sacramental equality of bishops, such recognition leads to the emergence of a jurisdiction of a universal first hierarch never mentioned either in holy canons or patristic tradition.'**[11]**

The Moscow document further states that 'the order in diptychs has been changing in history. In the first millennium of church history, the primacy of honor once belonged to the see of Rome. After Eucharistic communion between Rome and Constantinople was broken in the mid-11th century, primacy in the Orthodox Church went to the next see in the diptych order, namely, to that of Constantinople. Henceforth, the primacy of honor in the Orthodox Church at the universal level has belonged to the Patriarch of Constantinople as the first among equal Primates of Local Orthodox Churches.'**[12]**

This statement has been contested by some Orthodox theologians who refer to the fact that the 28th council of Chalcedon, on which the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople has been based, does not speak about him as 'second after' the Bishop of Rome: rather, it acknowledges him as 'equal' to the latter. Was there, then, some kind of double primacy in the Universal Church of the first millenium, with one pope for the West and one for the East? Byzantine sources speak rather of a *pentarchy*, a concept officially endorsed by Emperor Justinian and, according to which, the whole *oecumene* is divided into five patriarchates whose rights and privileges are equivalent. This equality was expressed at the Ecumenical Councils in various ways: how discussions were held, how decisions were taken, how decrees were signed.

It has been somewhat taken for granted by some that synodality is so linked with primacy that there can be no synod without a primate. But in the light of procedures in the first millenium, this fully applies only at the regional level. Indeed, at this level it was the metropolitan who presided at the council, and no council could take place without his presidency (unless the council was convoked to depose him, in which case one of the senior bishops would preside). As for the diocesan level, there were no councils or synods at this level because all councils in the ancient Church were in fact gatherings of bishops, and there was only a single bishop in any one diocese.

But what of the universal level? How was primacy and synodality exercised at Ecumenical Councils? These were convoked by the Emperor before whom only certain sessions of some Councils took place. Now, is it *primacy* that can be explained in ecclesial terms, or rather was it the Emperor facilitating discussions in order to make sure that order was properly preserved by the participants? (Indeed, protocols of Ecumenical Councils indicate that discussions were at times heated and aggressive, and

that some sort of mediation between the parties was at times highly appropriate).

Some maintain that it was the Patriarch of Constantinople who presided over the Ecumenical Councils. If this were true about some, it was certainly not true about all Councils. For example, at the 2nd Ecumenical Council, presidency – or rather chairmanship – shifted from Meletius of Antioch to Gregory of Constantinople and finally to Nectarius of Constantinople. At the 3rd Ecumenical Council, it was St Cyril of Alexandria who played a leading role once Nestorius of Constantinople had been deposed. At the four subsequent councils, the Patriarchs of Constantinople indeed exercised leadership. But was this not because these Councils actually took place in Constantinople or in cities within the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople (Chalcedon, Nicea)? Was it not because Constantinople was the capital of the empire and the Emperor, who convoked the councils, resided there? Who would have presided over an Ecumenical Council, had it taken place in Rome, or Alexandria, or elsewhere?

To assert that only Constantinopolitan Patriarchs presided over Ecumenical Councils from the fourth century onwards, because they were second in *taxis* after the Bishop of Rome, it would follow logically that, had he been present, the Bishop of Rome would have presided over such Councils. A number of theologians insist that this would indeed have been the case, regardless of whether such a Council would have taken place in Constantinople or Rome. There was, however, one instance when a pope had been physically present in Constantinople during an Ecumenical Council: Pope Vigilius was summoned to the Byzantine capital by the Emperor Justinian. But instead of presiding over the 5th Council, he spent his time under house arrest.

At its session in Amman, Jordan, in September 2014, the Joint Theological Commission on the Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue deliberated on the prerogatives of the Bishop of Rome as *primus inter pares* in the first millenium in order to establish what might be his prerogatives if, hypothetically, there were a restoration of full communion between East and West. Some argued that in such a situation the Bishop of Rome should be given the right to convoke Ecumenical Councils and preside at them. In addition, he would also preside over the Eucharistic celebration when the primates of the autocephalous Churches gathered for it. To some members of the Commission it seemed to be obvious that such prerogatives follow from primacy of honor at the universal level. Yet early church history offers no grounds for such claims. As we have seen, there has not been a single case of a pope presiding over an Ecumenical Council. Nor has there been any case when a pope would have concelebrated with Eastern patriarchs and presided over such concelebrations.

The issue of primacy in the Universal Church divided Orthodox and Catholics throughout the second millenium. It became a commonplace for the Orthodox, in their polemics with the Catholics, to insist that in the Universal Church there can be no visible head because Christ Himself is the Head of the Body of the Church. I will not quote from the relevant abundant writings since they are well known.

Throughout the twentieth century, however, this way of thinking was contested by some Orthodox theologians. The late Dean of this Seminary, Fr Alexander Schmemann, believed that 'if the Church is a universal organism, she must have at her head a universal bishop as the focus of her unity and the organ of supreme power. The idea, popular in Orthodox apologetics, that the Church can have no visible head, because Christ is her invisible head, is theological nonsense.'**[13]**

Current opinion in the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, however, clearly indicates that most Orthodox representatives concur with the millenium-old polemics against papacy rather than with the view expressed by Fr Alexander. The notion that a supreme hierarch for the Universal Church is a necessity has been approached from different angles over the last fifty years, but invariably the consensus among the Orthodox is that primacy as expressed in the Western tradition was and remains alien to the East. In other words, the Orthodox are not prepared to have a pope, even though different voices call for the adoption of a more centralized structure.

What kind of universal primacy is, then, acceptable for the Orthodox, and how in the absence of the Bishop of Rome, is this primacy exercised in the Orthodox Church? The official position of the Moscow Patriarchate is rather concise on this point: 'Primacy in the Universal Orthodox Church, which is the primacy of honor by its very nature, rather than that of power, is very important for the Orthodox witness in the modern world. The patriarchal chair of Constantinople enjoys the primacy of honor on the basis of the sacred diptychs recognized by all the Local Orthodox Churches. The content of this primacy is defined by a consensus of Local Orthodox Churches expressed in particular at pan-Orthodox conferences for preparation of a Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church. In exercising his primacy in this way, the Primate of the Church of Constantinople can offer initiatives of general Christian scale and address the external world on behalf of the Orthodox plenitude provided he has been empowered to do so by all the Local Orthodox Churches.'**[14]**

These statements, once circulated, provoked an emotional reaction on the part of certain Orthodox hierarchs. In particular, Metropolitan Elpidophoros of Bursa wrote an article entitled 'Primus sine paribus'. Therein he criticized the Moscow document for allegedly transforming primacy 'into something external and therefore alien to the person of the first hierarch.' Instead of this, he suggested that we consider any ecclesiastical institution as 'always hypostasized into a person' and that the source of primacy at all three levels of church organization is the first hierarch himself.**[15]** For the first time has an Orthodox hierarch bluntly asserted that the Ecumenical Patriarch is not *primus inter pares*, but *primus sine paribus*. That is, like the pope in the West, he is elevated above all other primates of the Local Orthodox Churches. This surely rings of an attempt to implant Roman Catholic ecclesiology on Orthodox soil.

The Moscow document’s comments with respect to the Ecumenical Patriarch are not meant to be

theological declarations. Nor are they an exhaustive description of the rights and prerogatives of the *primus inter pares* in the Orthodox tradition. Rather, they are modest attempts in describing the current situation in universal Orthodoxy. Crucial in the document is the word 'consensus'. It indicates agreement by all Orthodox Churches on certain prerogatives bestowed upon the Patriarch of Constantinople as first among primates. These prerogatives are not of a theological nature, neither are they attached, so to speak, automatically to the Patriarchal throne of New Rome. Rather, they proceed from an accord of the Orthodox Churches, based specifically on the decisions of pan-Orthodox conferences convened from the 1960s to the 1980s in preparation for the Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church.

As we all know, planning for this Council has proceeded for over a half century, and it was only in March 2014 that the Primates of the Orthodox Churches decided to speed up the process in order for the Council to take place in 2016, so long as no unexpected obstacles should arise. It has been agreed that the Ecumenical Patriarch will occupy central place in the presidium of the Council. Seated around him at his right and left will be his fellow primates, in accordance with the diptychs. The visible image of the Council will express Orthodox ecclesiology and will contrast with the image of a Roman Catholic Council where the pope is seated on a special throne, separated from the other bishops.

It is of crucial importance that the decisions of the pan-Orthodox Council will be taken by consensus, not by vote, and that they will be approved by the entire assembly of bishops, not by a 'universal primate'. This, again, points to a crucial difference between the Orthodox and the Catholic understandings of synodality and primacy. Catholic ecclesiology deems primacy, on its universal level, to be higher than synodality, because it is the pope who confirms the decisions of the council (synod); without his confirmation no decree of the council can be valid. For the Orthodox, synodality is higher than primacy, since the primate is subordinate to the council. At the regional level, it is one primate who is both subordinate and accountable to the regional synod, even though he convenes and presides over it. At the universal level it is a college of primates that is accountable to the rest of the bishops. The first hierarch of this college convenes the Council and presides over it, but together with other primates equal to him.

The way primacy on the universal level is exercised in the East continues to be a matter of consideration among the Orthodox. The pre-conciliar process has revealed certain differences among the autocephalous Churches in their understanding of what this primacy should entail. One of the concerns on the pre-conciliar agenda is that of autocephaly. Who has the right of granting autocephaly? History reveals diverse examples of how autocephaly has been achieved. In most cases it was proclaimed by a particular Church, and only later, sometimes after a long delay, was it recognized by Constantinople and other local Churches.

For instance, the Russian Church became *de facto* autocephalous in 1448 when the Metropolitan of

Moscow was elected without the consent of the Patriarch of Constantinople (who at that time was in union with Rome). Yet it was only during the period 1589-1593 that the Eastern Patriarchs recognized its autocephaly. This was done by means of two letters signed, not by the Ecumenical Patriarch alone, but also by other Patriarchs of the East. In these letters the Patriarchal rank of the primate of the Russian Church was recognized and the Patriarch of Moscow was placed fifth after the four Patriarchs of the East.

The delay between a proclaimed autocephaly and its recognition by Constantinople has varied from fewer than twenty to more than seventy years. The Church of Greece, for example, proclaimed autocephaly in 1833 but was not recognized as such by Constantinople until 1850. The Church of Serbia restored its autocephaly in 1832 but was recognized in 1879. The Church of Romania declared it in 1865 but was recognized in 1885. The Church of Bulgaria proclaimed autocephaly in 1872 but it was only in 1945 that the Patriarch of Constantinople recognized it by issuing a Tomos. The Church of Albania declared it in 1922 but was recognized in 1937.

The Church of Georgia is a special case. It was granted autocephaly in 466 from the Patriarchate of Antioch but its autocephaly was abolished by the Russian tsar in 1811 only to be restored in 1918. It was recognized by the Patriarch of Moscow in 1945 whereas the Patriarch of Constantinople officially recognized it as late as 1989, when a Tomos of autocephaly was granted by the Ecumenical Patriarch to the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia.

In all aforementioned instances the Churches date their autocephaly from the time it was first obtained or declared. According to Constantinople, however, it should be dated from the time when a Tomos of autocephaly had been granted by the Ecumenical Throne. Until recently the Patriarchate of Constantinople insisted on his exclusive right to proclaim autocephaly. This understanding was expressed by Metropolitan Elpidophoros who claimed that 'in the case of the archbishop of Constantinople, we observe the unique concomitance of all three levels of primacy, namely the local (as Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome), the regional (as Patriarch), and the universal or worldwide (as Ecumenical Patriarch). This threefold primacy translates into specific privileges, such as the right of appeal and the right to grant or remove autocephaly.'**[16]**

During discussion of this question in the pre-conciliar setting it was agreed that in future the granting of autocephaly will be a pan-Orthodox process in which all autocephalous Churches would participate. The Tomos of autocephaly will, therefore, be signed by all primates. In what order the signatures of the primates will appear in subsequent Tomoi remains to be agreed upon, but there seems to be a consensus about the necessity for all Churches to participate in this decision-making. Needless to say, the removal of autocephaly cannot now be imposed without the consent of all Orthodox Churches.

This consensus will perhaps pave the way towards solving the painful issue of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in America. Its autocephaly, granted by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970, is recognized only by some Orthodox Churches, though the canonical status of its bishops has never been questioned by any Church. This matter, together with other similar pending issues (such as the canonical status of the current primate of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia), should be solved by the entire Orthodox Church. In order to solve these problems we need not only primacy, but also synodality to be properly exercised at the universal level. Let us hope that the long-awaited pan-Orthodox Council will be an event at which synodality will be fully implemented, and primacy will be strictly exercised within the framework of consensual decision making.

I would like to finish this address by quoting the final paragraph of 'The Moscow Patriarchate's Position on the Primacy in the Universal Church': 'Primacy in the Church of Christ is called to serve the spiritual unity of her members and to keep her life in good order, *for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace* (1 Cor. 14:33). The ministry of the primus in the Church, alien to temporal love of power, has as its goal *the edifying of the body of Christ…that we…by speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body…according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love* (Eph. 4:12-16).'**[17]**

[1]Quoted in: Ninian Smart, John Clayton, Patrick Sherry, Steven T. Katz. *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*. Cambridge University Press, 1988. Page 183.

[2]Ecclesiological and Canonical Consequences of the Sacramental Nature of the Church. Ecclesial Communion, Conciliarity, and Authority. Ravenna, 13 October 2007, para. 5. Henceforth quoted as Ravenna statement.

[3]Ravenna statement, 10.

[4]Ravenna statement, 43.

[5]Ravenna statement, 44.

[6]Ignatius of Antioch. Smyrneans 8.

[7]Position of the Moscow Patriarchate on the Issue of Primacy in the Universal Church. Henceforth referred to as Moscow document.

[8]Moscow document 1 (1, 2, 3).

[9]Cyprian of Carthage. Ep. 69.8, PL 4, 406A.

[10]Moscow document 1 (1, 2, 3).

[11]Moscow document 3.

[12]Moscow document 1 (3).

[13]Alexander Schmemann. 'The Idea of Primacy in Orthodox Ecclesiology.' In: The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church. Edited by John Meyendorff. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. 150-151.

[14]Moscow document 5.

[15] http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/first-without-equals-elpidophoros-lambriniadis.

[16]http://www.patriarchate.org/documents/first-without-equals-elpidophoros-lambriniadis.

[17]Moscow document 6.

Source: https://mospat.ru/en/news/50932/