



THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Department for External Church Relations

Circular letter about the necessity to show vigilance because of provocative actions of some groups of people against churches of UOC diocese of Zaporozhye

TO THE CLERGY, MONASTICS, AND ALL THE FAITHFUL CHILDREN OF THE DIOCESE OF ZAPOROZHYE OF THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Beloved in the Lord all-honourable Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters,

Please be informed that at a number of churches of our God-saving diocese of Zaporozhye there appeared unknown people who collected signatures allegedly 'in behalf of the Pochaev Laura', but they had no documents from the church authorities to certify that their actions were blessed.

For instance, in Vilniansk, parishioners saw at a town marketplace a group of people who had collected signatures at the church "in behalf of the Laura" the day before. This time, the same group advocated that the St. Vladimir church of the UOC diocese of Zaporozhye should move from "the hostile Moscow Patriarchate" to "the patriotic Kiev Patriarchate". These people alleged that most of the permanent parishioners were in favour of this move and showed their signatures.

I officially state that it is a blatant and unscrupulous speculation on the authority of the great Orthodox shrine. The abbot of the Laura made no such request, and the supreme authority of our Church gave no blessing for such actions. Such manipulations with mentioning the name of the Laura are difficult to foresee; however, they can be prevented.

To do that, it is necessary to show vigilance.

Therefore, I bless:

1. the Clergy:

- to inform their parishioners about possible provocations;
- to pay attention to unknown personalities who appear in their churches for no apparent reason;
- if such personalities try to collect signatures, to establish their identity and report to the ruling bishop;
- to inform their parishioners about this circular letter during every Divine Service, starting from September 11.

1. Parishioners:

- to resist provocations and keep peace in the soul;
- to immediately report to the priest if someone asks you to put your signature under anything;
- to remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who warned us to beware of those who “come... in sheep’s clothing”, but who “inwardly are ravening wolves”;
- not to forget that “the road to hell is paved with good intentions” and that you can, with a stroke of the pen, by negligence, betray the Mother-Church and doom your soul to eternal torment.

Dear to my heart people of the Zaporozhye, St. Peter, in his epistles to the first communities in Asia Minor, called upon them to seek God’s way and imitate in their life the Lord Himself who has left us an example so that we could “follow his steps” (1 Pt 2:21) and “above all things have fervent charity” among us, “for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Pt 4:8). I am convinced that, following after Christ and showing by our love our sincere faith in Him, we will never get lost in this turbulent world and “there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”

With love in the Lord,

+Luka

Archbishop of Zaporozhye and Melitopol

Official website of the diocese of Zaporozhye of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate