



**THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

Department for External Church Relations

## **Bulgarian Locum Tenens in solidarity with Russian Orthodox Church in face of anti-church and anti-Christian moods in society**

In January 2013, the Moscow Patriarchate received a letter from Metropolitan Kirill of Varna and Veliki Preslav, temporary chairman of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, expressing support for the Russian Orthodox Church over alarming tendencies which have developed among anti-clerically minded groups in the Moscow Patriarchate countries.

Metropolitan Kirill stated with regret that anti-Christian and anti-church moods 'have been deliberately stirred up by the mass media hostile to Holy Orthodoxy' and represents 'a noisy and deliberate campaign carried out by journalists who profess liberal values and who not only declare their anti-church convictions but also give negative coverage to various events in church life, using partial and corrupt notions unsubstantiated by facts with the purpose to damage the authority and reputation of the Russian Orthodox Church, to belittle her leading salvific, spiritual, moral and national role in Russian society'.

The prominent Bulgarian hierarch reports that the Holy Synod he leads 'vastly condemns the vicious acts of blasphemy and sacrilege committed in churches in Moscow, namely in the Church of Christ the Saviour and the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Epiphany, as repeated cases of godless vandalism perpetrated in cathedrals, churches and chapels in various dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church'.

'The damage inflicted on holy icons, church shrines and sacred church vessels as well as outrages committed during divine services represent utterly reprehensible acts of Satanism to be punished according to canon law and the teaching of the Holy Fathers', he writes.

The Locum Tenens gives special attention to the repeated destruction of crosses, saying, 'The destruction of crosses erected for reverence is an act of Satanism to be condemned by both the Church

and society as hooliganism and to be prosecuted by appropriate bodies in conformity with civil laws’.

The Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church led by Locum Tenens Metropolitan Kirill of Varna and Veliki Preslav expressed profound sympathy with the Russian Orthodox Church over the attacks against her clergy which have grown in frequency. ‘From the Orthodox theological perspective, the acts of violence and threats endured by the clergy of the Holy Orthodox Church in the fold of the Moscow Patriarchate and their families and friends are a feat worthy of martyr’s wreath and moral reverence. What is needed is not only compassion for these people but also support and solidarity and the protection of the Holy Church to which they have devoted their lives and service and the assistance of the law enforcement’.

In conclusion of its letter, the Bulgarian Synod states its support for the Russian Orthodox Church as a Sister Church: ‘The Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church lifts up an ardent prayer to Merciful God glorified in the Holy Trinity – the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit that peace may indwell in the souls of all those nourished by the Russian Orthodox Church and all the citizens of the Russian Federation and that the Orthodox Russian society may acquire together with Christmas grace a spiritual and ecclesiastical prosperity’.

*DECR Communication Service*

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