# Congress of representatives of captured churches held at Kiev Lavra of the Caves




On February 22, 2021, a congress of representatives of captured churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church took place at the Kiev Lavra of the Caves. It was attended by 338 clergy and laity fr om 14 regions of Ukraine most affected by the raiding actions of the ‘OCU’ proponents.

The congress began with a prayer service for the beginning of a good cause and in support for the faithful subjected to persecution by schismatics.

With a blessing of His Beatitude Onufriy, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine, the forum was chaired by Metropolitan Anthony of Borispol and Brovary, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, who conveyed to the attendees His Beatitude’s blessing and read out his message. ‘I wish that our guide to the future be motivated by the words of St. John Chrysostom, ‘The Church is not wall and roof but faith and life. Do not hold aloof fr om the Church; for nothing is stronger than the Church. The Church is your hope, your salvation, your refuge’. May the All-Merciful Lord bless today’s gathering and help us all to work fruitfully for the glory of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church and for the benefit of our Ukrainian people’, the message of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy reads.

The Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church underlined, ‘Today many various forces encourage us to make a compromise with our conscience and admit that which is linked with the true faith only in words.

But can God be there wh ere canons are violated and schism is supported? Can Sacraments be celebrated in churches taken away by force, with bloodshed, despair and disaster for many people? Does God's grace dwell there wh ere falsehood, violence and aggression towards one's own neighbors reign? Frank answers to these question would not only put everything in its place, but also unequivocally explain why, against the background of provocative statements about new 'waves' of the so-called transfers, believers continue preserving faithfulness to the Lord and His Holy Church'.

Then Metropolitan Anthony addressed the clergy and the faithful with a word of support and told them about the work of the Church for the defense of religious rights and freedoms.

The current situation concerning the violations of rights and the defense of the faithful of the canonical Church was also dealt with in remarks of the chairman of the Synodal Law Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Archpriest Alexander Bakhov.

Following his remarks were stories about the life of their parishes related by representatives of dioceses. The meeting was moderated by Archpriest Nikolay Danilevich, deputy chairman of the UOC department for external church relations.

The first to speak on behalf of parishioners were the faithful of the Parish of Archangel Michael, at the Zadubrovka village, Bukovina.

A woman from the Ptichya village, Rovno Region, noted that during the six years in which attacks on their church continued, not a single person from the religious community moved to the schismatics.

The rector of the St. George church at the Ekaterinovka village, Ternopol Region, Archpriest Sergiy Gladun reported that after the capture of their church in raiding, the people's faith has become even stronger and the parish has become larger in number.

The rector of the Ascension religious community of the Olenovka village, diocese of Nezhin, Rev. Alexander Gladish shared his experience of the situation created by raiding representatives of the newly-created structure of the 'OCU' and spoke about the new church built by parishioners on their own.

After the statements made by diocesan representatives, the participants of the congress adopted an appeal to the Ukrainian President V. A. Zelensky, Prime Minister D. A. Shmygal, Supreme Rada Speaker D. A. Razumkov and deputies of this legislative body.

In conclusion, the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church recorded a video-appeal to the Ukrainian president and other officials asking them to defend their rights and addressed Local Orthodox Churches with a call for support.

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According to the chairman of the Law Department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, about 500 cases of capture or illegal re-registration of the UOC religious communities have been registered as of today. 'We have brought some 400 actions in defence of our rights and commenced about 250 criminal proceedings over illegal actions to capture churches and illegal re-registration of communities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church', said Archpriest Alexander Bakhov.

*DECR Communication Service*
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