Synod gives response after Primate of the Patriarchate of Alexandria concelebrates with head of “Orthodox church of Ukraine”



The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church expressed its deep sorrow at the fact of concelebration of Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria with the head of a schismatic structure operating in Ukraine, and noted that it “makes the split between the two Churches even deeper.”

This topic was on the agenda of the Holy Synod’s session held on September 23-24, 2021.

Over the years of his Primatial service Patriarch Theodoros had repeatedly spoken out in support of the canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Thus, in June 2016 he said in a video message, “I would like to wish many years to my brother, His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev. I lived in Odessa for ten years and I am aware that Onufry is a holy man. I want him to know that the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all of us are close to the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church and His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry.” As Patriarch Theodoros emphasised back then, “the Ukrainian Orthodox Church belongs to the Russian Church, and its Patriarch is the Patriarch of Moscow.”

In September 2018, during Patriarch Theorodos’s visit to Odessa, two weeks after the Patriarchate of Constantinople had appointed its “exarchs” to Kiev, concelebrating with him were Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine and bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In his homilies Patriarch

Theodoros called upon the believers to remain faithful to the canonical Church in Ukraine and its Primate, saying, “Stand in the Orthodox faith! Remain in the canonical Church!.. Our Church knew times of hardships, but Ukraine, this blessed Orthodox country, has a canonical Church, has His Beatitude Onufry, our brother – a blessed man of God and true monk… I will try to raise everyone’s awareness about the situation in Ukraine… the Ukrainian Church must remain in its canonicity. We do not need to give it something more, since it already has it as the Orthodox Church of Christ. It will be a great sin, for which we will be held accountable at the Second Coming, if even one drop of blood is shed.”

Until a certain time, Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria had on many occasions publicly spoken in support of the canonical Orthodoxy in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. However, on November 8, 2019, during the Divine Liturgy in Cairo, he commemorated the head of one of the Ukrainian schismatic groups among the Primates of the autocephalous Churches and announced his recognition of the so-called “Orthodox church of Ukraine” – the schismatic community that had received its “tomos of autocephaly” from Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. On November 30, 2019, during his visit to Phanar, Patriarch Theodoros concelebrated with Patriarch Bartholomew at the Divine Liturgy. Among the bishops who concelebrated with them was a “hierarch” of the aforementioned schismatic community.

On December 26, 2019, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church acknowledged the impossibility of commemorating the name of Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria in the diptychs, as well as maintaining prayerful and Eucharistic communion with him and those hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria who had supported or would support in future the legalisation of the Ukrainian schism.

Concurrently, the Russian Orthodox Church started receiving numerous requests from clerics of the Church of Alexandria asking to admit them to the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, as they disagreed with the decision of Patriarch Theodoros to recognise the Ukrainian schismatics and therefore did not want to remain under his omophorion. The Russian Orthodox Church refrained from giving an affirmative answer to such petitions in the hope that Patriarch Theodoros would change his decision and the hierarchs of the Church of Alexandria would not support the legalisation of the Ukrainian schism.

But it did not happen. On July 28, 2021, the Primate of the Church of Alexandria sent his official representative, Bishop Theodoros of Babylon, to an event in Kiev organised by the schismatics, and there, Bishop Theodoros read out a message of greetings on behalf of his Patriarch. On August 13, the Primate of the Church of Alexandria visited the island of Imbros in Turkey and concelebrated with the head of the so-called “Orthodox church of Ukraine.” Officiating at that Liturgy was Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. Later on the same day Patriarch Theodoros met with the “OCU” head and assured him of his resolute support. So far none of the hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria has expressed disagreement with the actions of Patriarch Theodoros aimed at supporting the schism in Ukraine.

Taking into consideration these facts and numerous appeals coming to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia from the clerics of the Orthodox Church of Alexandria who ask to be received under the omophorion of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Holy Synod instructed Archbishop Leonid of Vladikavkaz and Alania to thoroughly examine the requests and submit appropriate proposals to the Synod.

During its session held on September 23-24, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church also took a decision to relieve Archbishop Leonid of his duties as administrator of the Diocese of Vladikavkaz and Alania and hiero-archimandrite of the Alania Monastery of Dormition, expressing gratitude for his service. Archbishop Leonid retained his posts as vice-chairman of the Department for External Church Relations and administrator of the Patriarchal deanery of the Russian Orthodox Church’s parishes in the

Republic of Armenia.

According to the Synod decision, His Eminence Leonid becomes a vicar to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia with a title of Archbishop of Klin.

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