THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
Department for External Church Relations

Archbishop Theodosius of Sebastia: The odds are that standing behind Epifany's letter are forces hostile to the healing of the schism



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On August 4, 2022, Archbishop Theodosius of Sebastia of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem made a personal statement in which he shared his thoughts about the true value and meaning of the letter which Epifany Dumenko addressed to Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople by instruction of the "OCU Synod" on July 27.

The statement reads as follows:

It became known that the head of the schismatic structure Epifany has sent a letter to His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople with a request to appraise and condemn the actions of His

Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'. I would like to draw special attention to certain words from Epifany's letter which contains false accusations against the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and to present some of my theses on the matter.

1. In his letter Epifany failed to mention that it is he and the schismatics under his leadership who are the main problem. They have caused the schism in the Church and the break of Eucharistic communion with some Local Orthodox Churches. Epifany is a schismatic and lacks credibility for launching an initiative to solve the ecclesial crisis because he himself leads it, being its integral part and the root of many current problems within the Orthodox Church.

2. We hope that hierarchs of our Orthodox Church and Bartholomew, the head of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, would not leave the "poisonous" letter unchallenged as it has no purpose other than heightening the current crisis and is no way near resolving the Ukrainian ecclesial issue, because the resolution can be achieved only through dialogue, search for mutual understanding and rapprochement as well as the maintenance of contacts with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'.

3. Epifany's letter is openly suspicious. The odds are that standing behind it are forces hostile to the Orthodox Church. These forces oppose the healing of the Church schism, and their only wish is to aggravate it.

4. We call His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople and all Orthodox hierarchs to begin canonically based talks on resolving the current crisis since canons safeguard the unity of the Church and exclude any kind of division. We ought to achieve that what we are keen to have, not least to restore Eucharistic unity among sister Churches.

5. None of the means of resolving the issue imply disregard of the Russian Church. Those who ignore and attack her and her Patriarch do not actually wish the conflict resolution, but stand for the hostile to our Church agenda that includes divisions and discord.

6. We feel disappointed and sad about the break of communion among Local Orthodox Churches caused by the Ukrainian schism. This bleeding wound must be healed by love, wisdom, mutual forgiveness, mutual understanding, and a common dialogue with the help of church canons that can overcome any conflict and division in our Church, both small and very large ones.

7. We offer up prayers for the end to the war in Ukraine. We do not support war, violence and murder, but advocate brotherly love and peace We pray to the Lord beseeching Him to enlighten the hearts and minds of all leaders of this world so that their decisions would be wise and responsible for the sake of resolving political conflicts by peaceful means, dialogue, and mutual trust.

8. We set great hopes on the Lord Who has established the Church in this world for the salvation of people. May the Ukrainian church schism be healed and Eucharistic communion among all Orthodox Churches restored.

9. We in the Holy City hope for a solution to the Ukrainian ecclesial issue through talks to be held in the spirit of mutual love, understanding, patience and wisdom. To do this, it is necessary to staunchly resist political pressure being exerted by hostile forces which goal is to aggravate divisions within the one body of the Church of Christ.

10. We do not despair, but hope for the Lord and beseech Him to strengthen the Primates of our Orthodox Church to whom we express our profound respect in their responsible ministry and in the healing of the current schism.

11. One should not pay attention to the attacks of Epifany and his supporters who are the problem rather than its solution. They are servants of political forces hostile to our Church, the forces which have unleashed the current crisis that demands early solution.

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