



## **Metropolitan Joanikije of Montenegro and the Littoral: Ukrainian authorities are persecuting the Ukrainian Orthodox Church**



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On January 29, 2023, in his sermon after the Divine Liturgy at the Cetinje Monastery, Metropolitan Joanikije of Montenegro and the Littoral spoke about the persecution to which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is subjected today. The Union of Orthodox Journalists (UOJ) writes about it with reference to Svetigora Radio.

‘The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is a canonical self-governed Church and the only Church recognized by all the Orthodox Churches. However, in this war time she is suffering together with all her people’, the hierarch said.

He noted that ‘the schismatics together with the Ukrainian authorities have got to the Kiev-Pechersk Laura, one of the major Orthodox shrines on the globe. ‘They have taken away two large churches. In

the beginning, these churches were confiscated by the state and later on were transferred to the schismatics', His Eminence said.

According to him, the whole world has kept silent about the theft of the two great shrines in the Laura, which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has inhabited from of old. 'It is an ancient shrine, one of the most old while the whole world is keeping silent. But let them keep silent. God will reveal His justice as we will be praying to God. And prayer, not by our power but the power of God, works wonders indeed', the archpastor stressed.

He noted that churches of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were taken away earlier as well: fifteen years ago, he was an eyewitness to how the faithful in Ukraine defended their church the keys to which were taken away by representatives of the state to hand them over to their non-canonical structure. 'It was a bad sign. Certainly, the encroachment upon the shrine will have a backlash against each. Nobody will profit from it', Metropolitan Joanikije warned.

His Eminence recounted how the faithful in Montenegro collected aid for the UOC to be handed over to His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry. 'He came to us when we endured the greatest difficulties and led the largest procession with the cross that has ever been in Montenegro', the archpastor reminded, 'We would like to help the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as well now when she is literally persecuted'.

According to the hierarch, the Primate of the UOC is praying for all and helping all regardless of their political stand. 'Even in the most difficult times, he established a foundation for help to the needy <...> It is his attitude to injustice: he forgives all, pouring forgiveness on all just as the Lord Jesus Christ did on Golgotha. We should know it here, in Montenegro, and the whole world should know about it', the Metropolitan stressed.

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