



Bishops' meeting approves document on the distortion of the Orthodox doctrine of the Church in the actions of representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople



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“We, the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, cannot pass over in silence the sad divisions we are now enduring in the Orthodox world generated by the incorrect actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the new doctrines which are being spread by its Primate and official representatives. We consider it our duty to raise our voice in defence of the Orthodox doctrine of the Church in appealing to both our God-loving flock and our brother bishops of the Orthodox world,” the document entitled *On the Distortion of the Orthodox Doctrine on the Church in the Actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and Public Utterances of Her Representatives* states. The document was approved by the members of the Bishops' Convocation which took place on 19th July 2023 at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity and Saint Sergius.

The convocation noted that behind the schismatic actions of the bishops of Constantinople in Ukraine that has divided the Orthodox world family there stand innovations by the same bishops' innovations in the doctrine on the Church that have been forcibly imposed and which are aimed at the destructions of existing canonical norms. "The new conception of the primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople as the supposed earthly head of the Ecumenical Church accords to him rights and privileges that go far beyond the limits of any other Primate of the Orthodox Local Church and violate the canon laws of other Churches."

"As the illegal actions of Constantinople continue, and the ideas distorting the Orthodox doctrine of the Church are developed further, we consider it our duty to remind our flock of the fundamental principles upon which throughout the centuries Orthodox ecclesiology has been constructed and bear witness to the Fullness of Orthodoxy our fidelity to these unchanging principles. It is precisely their violation by the Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew that has become the reason for the schism within world Orthodoxy," the document states.

The document examines in detail the following topics of the claims of the Patriarch of Constantinople to the primacy of authority over the Ecumenical Church, the claims of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the role of the highest court of appeal within the Ecumenical Church, the 'restoration to holy orders' of schismatics who were not canonically ordained or have lost their priestly rank as a result of going into schism, the claims of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the right of receiving clerics without letters of release, the claims of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the exclusive right of granting autocephaly, the violation by the Patriarchate of Constantinople of the principle of the equality of the autocephalous Churches, the unilateral revision by the Patriarchate of Constantinople of acts that have canonical significance and the claims of the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the exclusive right of ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the diaspora.

"We condemn and refuse to accept the theoretical provisions of the new ecclesiological conception of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as well as the practical uncanonical illegal actions taken with the aim of inculcating this conception in contemporary church life. These provisions and actions do not correspond to the Orthodox Tradition, they destroy the canonical foundations of the Ecumenical Church and cause serious harm to the unity of the Local Orthodox Churches," the document emphasizes. The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church called upon the Primates of the Local Orthodox Churches, their fellow bishops and priests and deacons, monastics and laymen and laywomen who comprise together the Fullness of the Universal Church of Christ to pray fervently to the Lord Jesus who is the true Head of his Church "that all those who are scattered he may gather as one through the will of the heavenly Father by the grace of the Holy Spirit, that he may drive out all heresies and schisms from the garden of Holy Orthodoxy, that he may dispel all enmity and put to shame all falsehood, and that with one mouth and one heart the most glorious Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be glorified

within the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.”

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