Bishop Gerasim of Gornji Karlovac: We have no right to be silent about sufferings of Ukrainian Orthodox Church



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Bishop Gerasim of Gornji Karlovac (Serbian Patriarchate), together with the clergy and flock of the Gornji Karlovac Diocese, sent an open letter of support to the long-suffering archpastors and God-loving faithful people of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The ***message*** *published on the diocesan website reads as follows:*

While commemorating the sacrificial love revealed by Christ on Golgotha and celebrating our Saviour's joyful Resurrection through which death became life, hell turned into heaven, fear into joy, terror into rapture and death into eternal immortality, we have no right to be silent about the afflictions and persecutions experienced now by the living organism of the Church of Christ in Ukraine. For if we start

thinking that we are true to the Gospel in wishing someone well, but despite our well-intentioned thoughts prefer to say nothing, then it will be evildoers who will raise their voice and by their deeds initiate persecutions against those who love justice and truth!

In our thoughts and kneeling prayers we now appeal to the Lord as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is suffering fr om heartless persecutions. Day after day, our Holy Church suffers blows from the persecutors of the true faith, including those who have no scruples about identifying themselves with the dark forces from the abyss of hell. There is no doubt that today in Ukraine we find new confessors of the Orthodox faith – people languishing in prisons, Their Eminences Metropolitans Jonathan of Tulchyn and Bratslav, Paul of Vyshhorod the abbot of the Kyiv Caves Lavra, Luke of Zaporizhzhia and Melitopol, Theodosy of Cherkasy and Kaniv, Arseniy of Sviatohirsk, Longin of Bancheny, as well as many other archpastors, clergymen and their faithful and steadfast flock. All these brothers are suffering unjustly – first of all, due to the court trials fabricated based on false charges, due to incarceration and physical beatings; because places of worship are being taken away from them and all their basic human rights are being violated.

Dear suffering brothers, you are on the side of justice and truth, just like Hieromartyr Sava (Trlajić), Bishop of Gornji Karlovac, was at the time of dreadful persecutions and afflictions of the mid 20th century. Inspired by God, he said the words that have not lost their relevance to this day: “Genuine peace rests on justice, not force. Justice stems from good will, not self-will... Without the faith in God there is no mutual love. Without love there is no good will in the relationships between people. Without good will there is no justice, and without justice there can be no real and permanent peace on earth!”

Calling for justice and love, we ask our Lord to convert those who foolishly persecute Christ and His flock, to grant peace to our Holy Church in the places wh ere your perform your zealous service to God, to establish the plenitude of the Church of Christ on His path, and to give you strength so that you may, selflessly commending your whole self to God, withstand in the fight for preserving and upholding faith in your native lands. Things that are now being done to you amount to the systematic destruction of Orthodoxy and shameless persecution of Christ, to Whom you bear witness, Whom you confess and Whom you love with all your heart, all your soul and all your deeds!

We pray that you may be fortified by the Risen Giver of Life who gives us strength these days, for you as guardians of the Orthodox faith co-suffer with our Lord and every day go through your own Holy Friday in the hope of the Resurrection that will bring life, peace and freedom.

Remembering you – those who in the name of justice are enduring sufferings for your freedom of speech and for your brave confession of faith – we incessantly repeat the words of the Saviour: *If they persecuted me, they will persecute you* (Jn 15:20). Be firm and steadfast, for *he who endures to the*

end will be saved (Mt 24:13).

We offer our kneeling prayers to the Risen Lord that He may pour down His grace and love upon our afflicted brothers and sisters in Christ, whom we greet with the salutation of joy and new life – CHRIST IS RISEN!

Bishop Gerasim of Gornji Karlovac

together with the clergy and God-loving faithful people

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