



## His Holiness Patriarch Kirill Met with the Released Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav



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On June 25, 2024, at the Patriarchal and Synodal Residence in Danilov Monastery in Moscow, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus' received Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav.

Metropolitan Jonathan, who had been sentenced by a Ukrainian court to five years of imprisonment with confiscation of property on absurd charges, was released on Saturday at the request of the Patriarch as a result of negotiations. The hierarch did not plead guilty to the charges brought against him. His Holiness the Patriarch warmly welcomed Bishop Jonathan, who, according to His Holiness, "suffered significant hardships for his loyalty to the Russian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch, for his unwillingness to compromise to the point of betrayal." The head of the Moscow Patriarchate stated that he considered it his responsibility as Patriarch and his personal duty "to intervene in the situation to rescue the bishop from those dire and unpredictable circumstances."

"I have known Vladyka [Jonathan] for decades," shared Patriarch Kirill. "When I was the rector of the theological academy, he was my student and then the most remarkable choir director. I remember how that choir sounded, how even non-believers came to the academy just to listen to it. Vladyka put his soul

and talent into it. I vividly recall the image of a person ablaze with love for his work, expressing these emotions not only with the movements of his hands but with his entire being. Vladyka truly embodied a person fully immersed in spiritual music and, more broadly, fully devoted to church life."

His Holiness emphasized Metropolitan Jonathan's loyalty to canonical Orthodoxy and the Russian Orthodox Church. "For this loyalty—nothing else—Vladyka was repressed and found himself in a situation where his future caused pain in my heart. I realized that anything could be done to this person because his expression of loyalty to the Russian Orthodox Church was too uncompromising, honest, and principled," noted His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus'.

Addressing Metropolitan Jonathan, he said, "I thank you, Vladyka, for all the labors you have endured, for the hardships you have suffered, for preserving your principled life stance, and for not betraying your episcopal oath."

In recognition of his diligent archpastoral labors and in connection with his 75th birthday, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill awarded Metropolitan Jonathan of Tulchin and Bratslav the Order of St. Sergius of Radonezh (1st degree).

His Holiness also presented the archpastor with a commemorative cross and panagia.

"Your Holiness, I thank you for your efforts, thanks to which I am now in this holy place," said Metropolitan Jonathan in response. "The Patriarch is a symbol of the entire Russian Church. Not disgracing your name was my task, and it gave me strength in resisting evil."

The meeting between His Holiness the Patriarch and Metropolitan Jonathan was also attended by Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archpriest Nikolai Balashov, Advisor to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus', and V.R. Legoyda, Chairman of the Synodal Department for Church's Relations with Society and Mass Media and Acting Head of the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'.

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On August 7, 2023, the Vinnytsia City Court sentenced Metropolitan Jonathan to five years of imprisonment with confiscation of property on charges including "actions aimed at forcibly changing or overthrowing the constitutional order or seizing state power," as well as "encroachment on the territorial integrity of Ukraine."

In a statement published on the same day, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill called those charges absurd. As noted by the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, the unlawful sentence was preceded by numerous attempts to pressure Bishop Jonathan, who remained loyal to his Church and fellow believers in Christ despite everything.

"In this court decision, dictated by hatred towards the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, we see yet another act of blatant violation of religious freedom, an example of persecution for faith," noted His Holiness, stating that the charges brought against the hierarch were absolutely insignificant and the so-called evidence was fabricated.

His Holiness Patriarch Kirill repeatedly appealed to religious leaders, representatives of international and human rights organizations regarding the blatant cases of persecution against Metropolitan Jonathan, other hierarchs and clergy, monastics, and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, noting that the actions of the current Ukrainian authorities towards believers have taken on the character of open

religious persecution. His Holiness blessed to offer fervent prayers for the archpastors and clergy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church who are in captivity, as well as all believers who strive to preserve church unity and, in defending it, perform a confessional feat.

Metropolitan Jonathan did not plead guilty to the charges brought against him. While the appeal was being considered, the hierarch was under house arrest.

On June 18, 2024, the Vinnytsia Court of Appeal upheld the decision of the court of first instance. Earlier, Vladyka Jonathan was also deprived of the Ukrainian citizenship.

In March 2024, Metropolitan Jonathan suffered a stroke. Vladyka now needs treatment and medical rehabilitation, which will be provided with the assistance of His Holiness the Patriarch.

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