



## **Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church holds its regular session**

On 25 September 2018, a regular session of the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) chaired by His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine was held at the Kievan Laura of the Caves.

The participants expressed their concern over the appointment of the exarches to Kiev by the Patriarchate of Constantinople and called this 'a gross interference in the internal affairs of the UOC and violation of its canonical territory.' The Holy Synod has found the activities of the exarches "anti-canonical and violating the inter-confessional peace in Ukraine" and resolved that the exarches should leave the canonical territory of the UOC.

Members of the Holy Synod called upon Patriarch Bartholomew "to stop interference in the internal affairs of the UOC and violation of its canonical territory."

The decision was taken to suspend concelebration of the UOC bishops with bishops of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. At the same time members of the UOC Holy Synod called upon clerics, monastics and laypeople "to pray even more fervently for the preservation of the unity of Holy Orthodoxy."

The anti-constitutional bills, namely, No 4128 (on the change of subordination of religious organizations), No 4511 (on the special status of religious organizations), and No 5309 (on the change of names of religious organizations) are being considered by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with the aim to use them against the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in future.

On 20 September 2018 President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko supported the intention to change the name of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in his annual address to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

In this regard the UOC Holy Synod resolved that the abovementioned bills "are aimed at the legal liquidation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church through its forcible takeover by the change of its name, illegal interference in its governing bodies and the seizure of the property (holy sites, church buildings and monasteries)." The Ukrainian Orthodox Church acts in accordance with the law of Ukraine and any attempts to coerce it to the change of its name "are illegal and constitute the interference in the internal affairs of the Church."

The UOC Synod warned that "the adoption of the mentioned bills would artificially divide people and

make millions of the Ukrainian citizens, who are members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, aliens in their own country” and called upon all those involved in the implementation of these initiatives to reject “these legislative intentions as anti-church and running contrary to the Constitution of Ukraine.”

Certain decisions on the ordering of life of dioceses and monasteries and on the new liturgical holidays were also taken at the session.

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