

Constantinople explains decision to dissolve its Archdiocese of Russian Churches in Western Europe



It was reported on Tuesday that the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate had resolved to dissolve its Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe.

The report was later confirmed by the administration of the Archdiocese itself, which noted in its statement that the decision came as a complete surprise and had not been requested by anyone within the Archdiocese.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate then released its official statement on the matter on its Facebook page yesterday, stating that it had decided to revoke the 1999 Patriarchal tomos by which the pastoral care for the Western European Russian churches had been transferred to an Archbishop-Exarch over the parishes.

The statement also notes that the circumstances under which the Exarchate was

created have changed, and the new move is aimed at strengthening the ties between the Russian-tradition parishes “with the mother church of the patriarchate of Constantinople.”

Further, it is announced that the Russian parishes will be integrated into the dioceses of the Patriarchate of Constantinople already present in their countries while their particular liturgical and spiritual traditions will be preserved.

The message reads in full:

Communiqué on Orthodox churches of Russian tradition in Western Europe

The Holy Synod of the ecumenical patriarchate, in its session of 27 November 2018, decided to revoke the patriarchal tomos of 1999 by which it granted pastoral care and administration of orthodox parishes of Russian tradition in Western Europe to His Archbishop-Exarch.

This decision responds to the pastoral and spiritual needs of our time, with the greatest respect for canonical law and the spiritual responsibility that lies with us.

Indeed, the historical circumstances leading to its creation of such a structure in the aftermath of the Russian revolution of October 1917, just a hundred years ago, have evolved deeply. We give thanks to God for the tireless courage your communities have shown over time by preserving the rich spiritual tradition of Russia in the aftermath of the bloody persecution of the new atheist regime. We are particularly pleased that the mother church of the ecumenical patriarchate has taken the responsibility to offer its canonical protection to these communities and thus allow them to enjoy, in accordance with the church order, a freedom synonymous with life in the Holy Spirit.

Today's decision aims to further strengthen the link of Russian tradition parishes with the mother church of the patriarchate of Constantinople. Each of these communities has a spiritual heritage that has been established in the wake of a dramatic history marked by persecution and exile and has participated in the theological revival of Orthodoxy in the 20th century. It is indeed through personalities, theologians, philosophers, artists, leading to the Russian immigration that orthodox faith has radiated in Western Europe and beyond.

We are here to reassure the pious faithful of the parishes of Russian tradition in Western Europe and their communities. It is by pastoral concern that the ecumenical patriarchate has decided to integrate and connect parishes to the various holy cities of the ecumenical patriarchate in the countries where they are

located. Our Mother Church will continue to ensure and guarantee the preservation of their liturgical and spiritual tradition. The link of filiation will be all the more narrow with the siege of Constantinople that the latter is willing to continue to demonstrate his pastoral leniency and apostolic concern towards the people of God whose responsibility he has.

We humbly pray to the Lord, who we prepare at this time to welcome the Divine Nativity, that you will remain faithful to the ecumenical patriarchate, as the mother church of Constantinople is devoted to you. We hope that you will continue to be witnesses of orthodox faith in Western Europe through the practice of virtues and the fulfilment of the principles of the gospel.

We also thank his excellency, Archbishop Jean de charioupolis for driving with love and loyalty to his communities until this new stage of their history, confident in the grace of God who calls us to " be renewed by the spiritual transformation of intelligence and Take the new man, created by God in justice and holiness from the truth. " (Eph 4, 23-24)

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the father and communion of the Holy Spirit are always with you, by the prayers of the holy mother of God and those of all saints.

Phanar, November 27, 2018