

Western European Russian Exarchate to meet soon to respond to its dissolution by Constantinople



The Archdiocesan Council of the Archdiocese of the Russian Churches in Western Europe of the Patriarchate of Constantinople has released a statement explaining that the Archdiocesan General Assembly will soon meet to respond to Constantinople's sudden decision to dissolve the Archdiocese.

Confirming earlier reports, the Archdiocese, officially the Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe, released a message on November 28 explaining that it had been dissolved by decision of the Holy Synod of Constantinople. The message notes that the decision was a shock to the diocesan administration, who had in no way requested such a decision.

Later that day, Constantinople released its communiqué 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 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 was 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.

According to the latest communiqué, the date of the General Assembly, which will offer a response to Constantinople, will be determined by the December 15 Archdiocesan clergy meeting.

The message reads: “Staying true to the identity of the Archdiocese, we will gather around the ruling Archbishop and in those institutions that are defined by our statutes and are recognized by the Synod—first of all, within each parish or community, but also at the assemblies of clergy and laity, having the right to make decisions.”

And the Archdiocese explains: “Any Church decision, in order to be effective, must be officially accepted by the community to which it belongs, especially if it has not been requested by those who have to do it. Bishop John, as the ruling Archbishop, will be able to give an answer to the Synodal decision—respecting the conciliarity of the Church and the statutes of the Archdiocese” only after the General Assembly with the participation of all clergy and elected lay representatives.

The message also states that any clergy or communities desiring to leave the Archdiocese must request a letter of canonical request from Abp. John. One parish formerly of the Archdiocese, the Orthodox Church of the Nativity of Christ and St. Nicholas the Wonderworker in Florence, Italy already moved from the Archdiocese to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in late October in response to Constantinople’s actions in Ukraine.

The message also reiterates that Constantinople’s decision came as a surprise and was not requested by Archbishop John, “Thus, he retains full pastoral responsibility for the Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe.”

Clergy should continue to commemorate both Patriarch Bartholomew and Abp. John until the General Assembly is able to come to a decision.

Source: orthochristian.com