

Major issues face Orthodoxy, Orthodox Churches in 2020



A handful of major ecclesiastical issues face the world's ancient and junior Orthodox Patriarchates, the Autocephalous Archbishoprics and the Autocephalous Metropolises, at the dawn of the third decade of the 21st century.

The prospect of the convening of a Pan-Orthodox summit has again arisen over the past few days, while in the Adriatic country of Montenegro, ratification of a contentious law regarding religious freedoms and communities has generated heightened reactions and protests by Orthodox faithful in the country. Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Montenegro and the Littoral, which is under the canonical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Serbia, has previously warned the Montenegro government over their concerns regarding the prospect of confiscation of Church properties and relics in the predominately Orthodox country.



Meanwhile, reverberations from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople's granting of the Tomos of Autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church continued unabated in 2019, and are expected to spill over into 2020, due to the unconditional opposition by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Following the recognition of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, at the end of 2019, and after an earlier decision announced by the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece, His Beatitude Ieronymos, during a permanent Holy Synod session of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece, **the Patriarchate of Moscow announced that it would break holy communion with Primates and Metropolitans of the aforementioned Churches, which support recognition of autocephaly for the Ukrainian Church.**



In other matters on the forefront, a long-standing demand by the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the reopening of the Theological Seminary of Halki remains unfulfilled.

Among others, the European Union has broached the issue of the seminary's reopening with the Turkish government, during accession negotiations with the latter.

The Turkish state in 1971 ordered the Ecumenical Patriarchate's primary seminary shut down.

The issue of the school's reopening has annually been cited in the US State Department report on religious freedom around the world, with both US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback, referring to the Halki matter in their opening statements during the unveiling of the 2019 report.

