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His Beatitude Onuphry: Our Church is the Church of Martyrs



Realizing the feat and heritage of new martyrs and confessors of XX century lets us make certain again that evil forces cannot overcome the Church, the Primate said.

The history of the Church in the Soviet period is a tragic and at the same time majestic page of the twentieth century, drenched in the crimson blood of innocently killed Orthodox Christians. His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine recalled in his welcoming address to the organizers, participants and guests of the International Scientific Conference " Church of Martyrs: Persecution of the Faith and Church in the 20th Century", which began its work on the territory of the Kiev Caves Lavra on February 6, 2020. The text of the message was published by the Information and Education Department of the UOC.

"The Soviet government, starting in 1918, set itself the goal of eradicating religion and building a new atheistic society," said the Primate in his address. "And the very first instrument of Bolshevik power, with the help of which drastic changes took place in relations with the Church, was Soviet legislation. The very first legislative acts undermined the social and economic basis of the Orthodox Church. The next

destructive step towards the Church was the physical extermination of the clergy and Orthodox believers. Already in the first years of the existence of communist power, without trial and court, waves of murders of Orthodox hierarchs and clergy swept over the entire territory of the Soviet Union <…> the terrorist policy of the Soviet government was aimed at the complete elimination of the Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union."

His Beatitude recalled that the peak of repression occurred in 1937-1938, when the elite of society was destroyed, including hundreds of thousands of clergy, monks and laity.

"The physical destruction of the episcopate, clergy, monastics and believers was accompanied by the confiscation of church property, the closure of Orthodox temples and monasteries as centers of spirituality. In total, by the end of the 1930s, there were only two churches left in the Kiev Eparchy; all monasteries were liquidated, the system of spiritual education was destroyed," noted the Archpastor.

He added that alongside the methods of terror, atheistic propaganda stepped up, which regurgitated with renewed vigor during the years of the so-called "Khrushchev" persecution of the Church, when believers were again subject to discrimination in society through humiliation of their religious feelings.

"Today we have gathered at the scientific forum not only to take a look at the tragic page of the last century, but also to understand and once again make sure that the forces of evil, the 'gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church' (Matt. 16 :18). Our Church is the Church of the Martyrs, and their shed blood is a testament to an unshakable faith in God. 'For the Church of Christ, blood and persecution is not new. All of this already happened. And all this did not lead to the destruction of the Orthodox Church but to its glorification and growth. Persecution is sent to test our faithfulness to God. And for the firmness of faith, the crown of life awaits us,' says the holy martyr Onufriy (Gagaliuk)," His Beatitude Onuphry emphasized in his address.

According to him, the feat of the new martyrs once again testifies to the truth of the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that everything is possible for a believer (Mark 9:23).

"Faith in God gave the new martyrs the power to endure insults and persecution, cold cellars and night interrogations, hunger and cold in exile, and terrible torture. To endure all this and not be spiritually damaged could only those who were strengthened by the power of God, in whom there was an unshakable faith and the

all-embracing grace of God. All these qualities were revealed to us by the new martyrs and confessors of the 20th century. I believe that today's scientific conference will be a good basis for understanding the feat and heritage of the new martyrs and confessors of the twentieth century. I invoke God's blessing upon your labors. May our Lord Jesus Christ pray to the holy new martyrs and confessors to make us all sensible and guide us in faith and truth," concluded the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

As reported by the UOJ, on February 6 and 7, 2020, with the blessing of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine, the International Scientific Conference "Church of Martyrs: Persecution of the Faith and Church in the 20th Century" is being held on the territory of the Holy Dormition Kiev-Pechersk Lavra. Scholars from 17 countries take part in the scientific forum.

— Source: spzh.news