

Polish Church rejects Pat. Bartholomew's request to recognize new Ukrainian church



December 15's "unification council" did not solve the problem of schism in Ukraine but rather further complicated it, His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland wrote to Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople in response to the message sent by Constantinople to the primates of all the Local Churches on December 24, reports the Ukrainian Church's Department for External Church Relations (DECR).

The Polish primate also wrote that Pat. Bartholomew has acted in defiance of the canonical tradition and that the Ukrainian schismatics lack the grace of ordination. Met. Sawa and the Polish Church have been among the strongest supporters of the canonical Ukrainian Church and its primate His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine and are the first to publicly reject the results of the "unification council."

In his letter, Pat. Bartholomew informed the Churches of the results of the so-called "unification council" and expressed hope in their recognition of the newly-created structure and its primate, "Metropolitan" Epiphany Dumenko.

In response, Met. Sawa recalled the Polish Church's position stated in May on the

need for repentance from the Ukrainian schismatics and for a Church-wide discussion on the provision of autocephaly, as well as the resolution of the Bishops' Council of the Polish Church from November 16 in which clergy are forbidden to have liturgical or prayerful communion with representatives of the schismatic "Kiev Patriarchate" or the schismatic "Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church"—the two groups that united into the new schismatic "Orthodox Church of Ukraine" on December 15.

Met. Sawa further notes that the "so-called 'unification council,' which was held on December 15, 2018 in Kiev did not eliminate the problem but, conversely, strengthened it, introducing a host of painful not only ecclesiastical, but also socio-political phenomena into the life of society."

"Returning to the so-called 'unification council,' it should be noted that representatives of the schismatic church groups who have been deprived of their priestly and episcopal orders took part in it," His Beatitude writes.

... Philaret Denisenko was deprived of his order and reduced to the position of a layman. Then he 'ordained' his new followers. These are people without the grace of the Sacrament. We recognized this: Your Holiness and all the primates of the Local Orthodox Churches. It should be noted that according to our ancient Church traditions, a ban is lifted by the one who imposed it. In any case, we have not seen remorse, repentance, or humility, which normally precede the lifting of bans, in Philaret or his followers! There was none. And therein lies the problem. Therefore, they cannot be recognized as true pastors who can celebrate the Sacraments. The so-called "Metropolitan Epiphany," in fact a secular person, was harmed.

At the end of the letter, the Polish primate addressed Pat. Bartholomew with an exhortation: "Your Holiness! Your decision about the Church in Ukraine requires a pan-Orthodox discussion. Therefore, I again to turn to you with a request to reconsider the decision to gather the primates of the Local Orthodox Churches... We want to see that your actions unite Orthodoxy and not divide it."

In late September, Met. Sawa had personally called upon Pat. Bartholomew to convene a pan-Orthodox council to resolve the Ukrainian crisis, as have many several Synods, primates, and hierarchs, but the Patriarch ignored his call, as he has all those addressed to him. He also wrote a letter of support to Met. Onuphry in mid-December.

Met. Sawa sent a copy of his reply to Pat. Bartholomew to the primates of all the Local Orthodox Churches and to Met. Onuphry.

The Ukrainian DECR notes that in calling Met. Onuphry the “Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine,” Met. Sawa continues to recognize him as the canonical primate in Ukraine, although Pat. Bartholomew has declared that Met. Onuphry holds that title and position uncanonically and is no longer the primate of the Ukrainian Church following the “unification council.”

Note that while “Metropolitan” Epiphany Dumenko has not been commemorating His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russian during the Divine Liturgy, he does presumptuously commemorate Met. Sawa and all the other primates, despite the fact that none of the Local Churches have accepted communion with the new Ukrainian church.

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