

RUSSIAN VICARIATE OF PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE IN FRANCE OFFICIALLY FORMED



"The Ecumenical Patriarchate has always been concerned to serve all Orthodox without distinction of nationality or ethnic origin," writes Patriarch Bartholomew. Late last year, Metropolitan Emmanuel of Gaul of the Patriarchate of Constantinople announced the creation of a vicariate of Russian parishes in France, and on Saturday, July 4, a constitutive general assembly of the vicariate was held, thus marking its official formation.

"There was an historical event yesterday. The Russian Vicariate of the Metropolis of Gaul of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was officially formulated," writes Hieromonk Damaskin of the new vicariate.

Patriarch Bartholomew sent a message on the occasion of the assembly in which he notes that the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople resolved to remove the status of exarchate from the Archdiocese of Russian Churches in Western Europe in November 2018 and to instruct its parishes to move under their local Greek metropolis "in order to conform to the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church."

This change of status eventually led to the majority of the Archdiocese, under the guidance of its hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan John of Dubna, to return to the

Russian Orthodox Church from which it was born in the early 20th century. The new vicariate is made up of those clergy and laity who did not follow Met. John and did not join other Churches, such as the Romanian Patriarchate.

“From now on, the vicariate is organized and is entirely part of the Metropolis of France, under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel,” the Patriarch writes.

“It is the mission and vocation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to preserve the unity of the Orthodox Church by respecting the ecclesiological criteria according to which the bishop of a locality must be the only one in whose name the Holy Eucharist can be celebrated, and the sole administrative and pastoral manager,” he continues.

“Moreover, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has always been concerned to serve all Orthodox without distinction of nationality or ethnic origin,” he adds.

The Metropolis of France has a rich history, and the parishes of the vicariate have their own history with Constantinople dating back to 1931, Pat. Bartholomew writes. It is “thanks to the protection offered by the Great Church” that the parishes have been able to bear witness to the Gospel in the West, he states.

The Archdiocese of Russian Churches of Western Europe originated within the Russian Church in the early 20th century, but ended up with the Patriarchate of Constantinople due to the difficulties of the 20th century. It existed as an exarchate until November 2018, when the Patriarchate suddenly revoked its exarchate status, instructing the parishes to join their local Greek-tradition metropolises. The Archdiocese, however, voted overwhelmingly to remain together as an ecclesiastical body and began exploring different avenues for its future. In the end, Abp. John joined the Moscow Patriarchate after Constantinople suddenly and unexpectedly released him from its jurisdiction, and over 80 clergymen later voted to go with him. The Archdiocese formally reunited with the Russian Church at a service in Moscow in early November last year.

Met. Emmanuel of Gaul offered to create a vicariate for the parishes of the Archdiocese within his metropolis after seeing that the majority and clergy were intent on remaining together under the guidance of Met. John of Dubna.

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