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Mt. Athos divided over Ukraine issue, source says



Though many Athonite monks are “extremely negative” about the recent actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Ukraine, there is no consensus on the Mountain, a source close to the monastic communities told RIA-Novosti yesterday.

“Athonite monks—at least in personal conversations—are very negative about this. But there has been no official decision about it yet,” the source said, answering the question of what kind of attitude prevails on the Holy Mountain towards Constantinople’s new Ukrainian “church.”

The Holy Kinot, the ruling body on the Mountain, will probably meet soon to discuss the issue—perhaps yet in January or in February, the source said.

Despite many personal negative feelings, “There are, of course, monasteries and some sentiments that support the Patriarchate of Constantinople’s actions.” A hieromonk and calligrapher of Xenophontos, one of the 20 ruling monasteries on the Mountain, prepared the tomos of autocephaly that Patriarch Bartholomew gave to the Ukrainian schismatics, with the blessing of Abbot Alexios of Xenophontos.

Asked whether there could be a division on the Holy Mountain about the issue, the source noted that “It is quite likely that there will be.”

As a whole, however, the monasteries might simply condemn Constantinople’s interference in Ukraine without taking any further actions.

It was reported in November that several Greek monasteries on Mt. Athos added a special petition to the Litany of Peace in all of their services to specifically pray for His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine, the head of the canonical Ukrainian Church, and for his much-suffering flock.

“We know that the majority of the abbots of the Athonite monasteries do not agree with the anti-canonical decisions of the Phanar,” His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony of Boryspil and Bovary, the Chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, said at that time.

Though no official response has come from the Sacred Community yet, individual abbots have spoken out over the past few years, most recently Archimandrite Parthenios (Murelatos), one of the oldest inhabitants of the Holy Mountain and the abbot of the Monastery of St. Paul, who expressed his belief that the Ukrainian Church should maintain its unity with the Moscow Patriarchate.

Also, in March 2015, when Met. Onuphry was visiting Mt. Athos, Archimandrite Ephraim of Vatopedi stated, “With a heavy heart I am anxious about the present state of Ukraine and from Holy Mount Athos I am asking the Ukrainian people to remain faithful to the canonical Church, the canonical primate and the canonical Synod. We want Ukrainian residents to support the canonical Church. It is important for one’s salvation to obey the canonical Church.”

And in an address to the Ukrainian people in 2017, Fr. Ephraim noted that the issue affects all of Mt. Athos, saying the Holy Mountain is very grieved about the schism in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. According to the abbot, the schism cuts like scissors, and he who went into schism must understand that he is outside of the fold of the Church. “If someone is outside of the Church … he cannot attain holiness,” he said.

“Therefore, we entreat all of our brothers who have left the canonical Church, we appeal and we entreat that they would return to the womb of the canonical Orthodox Church,” the elder said.

(Source: OrthoChristian)