

04/02/2019

## **“It is time for us to raise our voices”—Patriarch John of Antioch calls on brother primates to resolve Ukraine issue**



His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All East traveled to Moscow last week to participate in the celebrations for the 10th anniversary of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill's enthronement as the primate of the Russian Church, including the Divine Liturgy on Friday, February 1 at Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral with primates and representing 11 of the 15 Local Orthodox Churches.

During his stay in Moscow, he spoke with several media outlets, addressing the ongoing crisis in Ukrainian Church life and the need to protect the unity of the Orthodox Church.

Speaking with RT, His Beatitude spoke of the damage that has been done to Orthodoxy in the Ukrainian crisis: “Regarding the situation with the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, I can express my regret inasmuch as these actions have caused damage to the Orthodox Church. We had hoped that all these steps would not have been so fast, that the majority of the opinions of the other Churches would have been taken into account and that an agreement would have been reached through consultation.”

Orthodox unity, in Pat. John’s view, is a red line that cannot be crossed.

“We do not say that this schism is a political one, but it seems there are clearly other factors here—political and others, that lie behind this problem,” the Patriarch added.

Speaking with reporters on Saturday, Pat. John again called for a council to address the Ukrainian issue, as he and the Antiochian Church have done many times already. “The unity of the Orthodox world is the basic foundation for everything. What happened in Ukraine in connection with the ‘new church’ needs a conciliar decision from all the Orthodox Churches. For a Church to become autocephalous, there must be agreement and dialogue between the Orthodox Churches,” the Antiochian primate said, reports RIA-Novosti.

Despite the present difficulties, Pat. John hopes that unity will be maintained and schisms will be avoided.

“We love the Russian Church. The Antiochian Church is historically very connected with the Russian Church,” he added in response to a question from a Ukrainian journalist.

In an interview with RIA-Novosti, the Antiochian primate also spoke against the blatant state interference in Church matters in Ukraine, again calling for a conciliar Church solution to such problems.

“For a Church to become autocephalous, there absolutely must be a pan-Orthodox consensus. And all the more there must be the agreement of the Mother-Church that it belongs to,” Pat. John said, referring to the Russian Church.

Interestingly, Pat. John also notes that there is a desire for the primates of the Alexandrian, Serbian, Cypriot, Greek, Albanian, and Antiochian Churches to meet to discuss the Ukrainian problem, though it has not happened yet.

And in his homily following the Divine Liturgy celebrated on Pat. Kirill’s 10th

anniversary, His Beatitude spoke of how world powers “use the Church as a toll for their policies and interests, seeking to weaken Her witness in the world, and to divide Her into national churches.”

Addressing the lack of conciliarity and dialogue in the Church today, including what is happening in Ukraine, the Antiochian primate called on all his brother primates to boldly speak up: “But I have to stress that it is time for us to raise our voices. The silence before these deviations is abhorrent, if it does not turn into prayer and supplications. I appeal to all our brothers, their Holinesses and Beatitudes, the primates of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches to gather and meet in order to proclaim our commitment to the unity of our Holy Orthodox Church, and our belief that Her light coming from the Light of Christ remains bright and glorious.”

The Holy Synod of the Antiochian Church made a statement in early October, calling for Patriarch Bartholomew to convene a pan-Orthodox council on the matter and warning that unilateral actions and the establishing of parallel jurisdictions do nothing to solve divisions and unite the Church. Pat. John renewed the call for a pan-Orthodox council in his response to Pat. Bartholomew’s request to recognize the results of December 15’s “unification council,” though Pat. Bartholomew explicitly rejected this call.

A joint statement between Pat. John and His Holiness Patriarch Irinej of Serbia in October also called for a pan-Orthodox solution to the Ukrainian problem.

(Source: OrthoChristian – Photo: rt.com)