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Holy Synod examines Ukrainian ecclesiastical issue at first 2019 working session



On Thursday, 21 February 2019, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church held its working session at the Synodal Hall of the Patriarchal Residence, under the chairmanship of His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel, during which the following decisions were made:

1.The Holy Synod appreciated the manifold and rich activities carried out in the Romanian Patriarchate marking the 1918 Great Union Centennial, culminating with the consecration of the Holy Altar of the National Cathedral on 25 November 2018.
2.At the same time, the numerous social-philanthropic activities, summing up to over 114 million RON (approx. 24 million euros) were highlighted.
3.Particularly, the Holy Synod considered the activities carried out by the Romanian hierarchs and clergy in the diaspora and the dioceses in the vicinity of the country's borders towards keeping the Romanian identity, spirituality and culture.
As regards the ecclesiastical situation in Ukraine, the Holy Synod stressed the following aspects:

1.For almost thirty years, the issue of the Ukrainian schism was not solved, nor was any appeal made for a pan-Orthodox mediation, as was the case in the past with the schism in Bulgaria. Noticing this deadlock in resolving the situation, the Ecumenical Patriarchate granted the Tomos of autocephaly to the hierarchs, clergy, and believers who were in schism with the Russian Orthodox Church and the entire Orthodoxy, but this Tomos was accepted only by the Ukrainian Orthodox people who were not in communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. Therefore, the problem of Ukrainian ecclesiastical unity is not fully resolved at present, also because in Ukraine there is a large Russian population having a direct relation to the Moscow Patriarchate.
2.Regarding this tense ecclesiastical situation in Ukraine, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church reiterates its stance expressed during its previous working sessions of 24 May and 25 October 2018. It was then recommended that, through dialogue, the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Moscow Patriarchate identify a solution to this ecclesiastical dispute by preserving the unity of faith, by respecting the administrative and pastoral freedom of the clergy and faithful in this country (including the right to autocephaly), and by restoring Eucharistic communion. In the event of an unsuccessful bilateral dialogue, it is necessary to convene a Synaxis of all Primates of Orthodox Churches to solve the existing problem.
3.For a concrete and correct decision of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, at a forthcoming working session, the Holy Synod will consider with priority that there are 127 Romanian Orthodox parishes in Ukraine, especially in Northern Bukovina, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Moscow Patriarchate. A real consultation is needed with these Romanian Orthodox people, who are concerned with preserving their ethnic and linguistic identity. In this sense, it is necessary to obtain written assurances from Ukrainian ecclesiastical and state authorities that the ethnic and linguistic identity of these Romanians will

be respected, and that these Romanian Orthodox will have the possibility to organise themselves within a Romanian Orthodox Vicariate and to be able to cultivate spiritual relations with the Romanian Patriarchate, in order to be supported by sending liturgical and theological books in their mother tongue, that is, in the Romanian language. It was noted that a Ukrainian Orthodox Vicariate has been operating in Romania since 1990.

4. In addition, the Romanian Patriarchate will ask the Ecumenical Patriarchate to clarify the problem of the non-canonical hierarchs and priests in the West, who belonged to the former 'Kiev Patriarchate'.

After completing the above-mentioned consultations, the Holy Synod will express its official position on the situation of Orthodoxy in Ukraine.

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