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Bulgarian Orthodox Church Plovdiv Metropolitan Nikolai launches stinging attack on Pope's visit



Controversial hardline Plovdiv Metropolitan of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Nikolai, has launched a vitriolic attack on the visit to the country by Pope Francis.

“The visit by the Pope of Rome is a political act, the goal is to unite all the churches around Rome, and when the Antichrist comes, for the Pope to meet him,” Nikolai was quoted by Plovdiv news website podtepeto as saying at a church service to celebrate the Orthodox church’s St George’s Day on May 6.

The visit by Pope Francis to Bulgaria saw him received at the Holy Synod for talks with Patriarch Neofit and members of the church’s governing body, which otherwise has forbade Bulgarian Orthodox Church clergy from joint worship with the head of the Roman Catholic church.

Nikolai told the congregation at a church in Plovdiv: “We met the Pope of Rome as head of state of the Vatican state, but no one can force us regarding common worship with him”.

“We all want the Christian churches to unite. However, this can only be done by church people when the bishops gather and discuss how to do that. Politicians do not want that, they are just the opposite.

“For example, the so-called ‘ecumenical movement’ that seeks to unite all religions. But you know, there is a religion of Satan. How to unite everyone? It is not possible to unite the light and the darkness,” Metropolitan Nikolai said.

Nikolai, who in past years was the subject of negative media reports and social network comments about his expensive watch and his hardline attitude – in a radio interview years ago, he confirmed his belief that the Pope is a heretic – said “this act was prepared long in advance”.

“It started with a media campaign against the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. This is not about my watch. It is about everything the Holy Synod decided and did not decide. This campaign was prepared for the Pope to come and be declared the Holy Father, living in misery and poverty.”

“The purpose of all of this is to unite all the religions around the Pope, so that when the Antichrist comes, to meet him, and through him also all who are with him,” Nikolai said.

“We will not give up Orthodoxy. We did not give up Orthodoxy in the five centuries of slavery,” he said, referring to the 500 years that Bulgaria was under Ottoman rule. “The slavery was defeated by Orthodoxy. Only it will release us,” he said.

— Source: [Sofia Globe](#)