

SUFFERING ARCHDIOCESE OF RUSSIAN CHURCHES WESTERN EUROPE TO CONVENE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON SEPTEMBER 7



A Pastoral Assembly of the Archdiocese of Russian Churches in Western Europe was held in Paris on Saturday where the members continued to discuss the future of their jurisdiction following the sudden removal of its exarchate status in November by the Holy Synod of Constantinople. His Eminence Archbishop John of Chariopoulis urged that a decision needs to be made as soon as possible, and a General Assembly was scheduled for September 7.

The archdiocesan administration office issued a new communiqué on the results of Saturday's meeting today.

The Pastoral Assembly had been convened by Abp. John in his pastoral letter of

April 22 and was held on the premises of the St. Serge Theological Institute in Paris. The assembly began with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The gathered clergy then heard the report of Fr. Jean Gueit on the ongoing talks with the Patriarchate of Moscow and that of Alexander Fostiropoulos on the recent visit of a delegation to the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Archpriest Vladimir Yagello then presented the position of the members in favor of proclaiming autonomy, while Archpriest Jivko Panev, teacher of canon law at St. Serge, explained why such a course seems unlikely. At the General Assembly in February, the Archdiocese overwhelmingly voted to stay together as a body and discussed various options: joining the Moscow Patriarchate, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, or the Romanian Patriarchate, among others.

The presentations were followed by a 2-hour debate that “highlighted the profound suffering suffered by the ecclesial body ... shaken in its integrity and identity,” the communiqué reads.

In his conclusion, Abp. John explained that he had no choice but to propose a new canonical solution and that he believes a decision must be taken as soon as possible in order to avoid further harm to the Archdiocesan body and even its de facto dismantling. Abp. John has openly spoken previously about his desire to see the Archdiocese join the Moscow Patriarchate, which has offered to accept it intact as an ecclesiastical body.

The message ends noting that a General Assembly will be convened on September 7.

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