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Ukraine church row: Metropolitan Epifaniy responds to Filaret's ultimatums



“We seek unity, and we seek to have peace reigning over our church,” Epifaniy said.

Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine, head of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine (OCU) Epifaniy has said he is ready to listen to the advice of ... Filaret, but is not going to fulfill his ultimatums.

"In general, I never ignored his opinions, I often spoke with him and I continue to communicate. But it's necessary to understand the format of communication. It's necessary to understand the difference between advice and ultimatums. When talking with Honorable Patriarch Filaret, I repeatedly insisted on this – I am ready to listen to his advice. Because he really has a lot of experience in leading the church for more than half a century. But I am not ready to fulfill certain ultimatums because I am a primate who has been lawfully elected at the Unification Council," Epifaniy said in an interview with BBC News Ukraine.

He said he personally has no right to change decisions taken collectively by the Council.

"Therefore, I listened, I talked, but all this time, to a certain extent, I, as the head of the church, was even humiliated due to pressure and demands incompatible with the charter and the tomos," Epifaniy said.

At the same time, he promised he would do everything possible for the sake of peace and unity in spite of anything.

He also commented on Filaret's requirement to hand over under his control church's internal affairs and deal for foreign affairs only.

"I was elected by a majority vote at the Unification Council and accepted this as a manifestation of God's will, therefore, as a primate, I must adhere to the canonical order, statute, and norms of the tomos. I do not have the right to violate them by satisfying the desires of any bishop of our church. This does not depend on me. As a primate, I have no right to personally change what decisions taken collectively," Epifaniy said.

He also assured there was no split in the OCU, despite the recent harsh statements.

Asked of the possibility of Filaret's excommunication, Epifaniy said: "I wouldn't comment on issues that bring certain dissonance and impose a split. Why should we say "rest" or "excommunication"? This is groundless and destructive."

"We seek unity, and we seek to have peace reigning over our church," Epifaniy said.

Commenting on Filaret's claim that Epifaniy seems to suit Russia as head of the OCU as there is no criticism coming from Moscow toward him, the Metropolitan said "it is not about me."

"What's Moscow's objective? It's having us lose the tomos [of autocephaly].

Because losing the tomos means losing canonical recognition. It's this canonical recognition which once was the argument of the Russian Orthodox Church that restrained Orthodox believers from shifting toward the Kyiv Patriarchate."

He stressed, "Moscow will never be okay with any of OCU primates because they are not okay with the very fact the canonically-recognized church exists in Ukraine."

"There have been a lot of statements over the past days, but there is no split in the OCU. We respect Honorable Patriarch Filaret, who did much to make the Ukrainian church autocephalous," Epifaniy added.

As UNIAN reported earlier, on April 27, Patriarch Filaret said he was not satisfied with the OCU's status as a metropolis.

On May 14, Filaret invited the OCU's hierarchs to the traditional UOC-KP prayer celebration in honor of holy martyr Makariy to St. Volodymyr's Cathedral in Kyiv, using invitation blanks of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, in defiance of the newly-created OCU which received a tomos of autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Only four of 60 clerics invited eventually showed up.

Earlier, Filaret refused to recognize the UOC-KP as "liquidated" as a result of the creation of the OCU.

At the same time, the Ministry of Culture assures that the UOC-KP was dissolved on December 15, 2018, during the Unification Council.

— Source: [Unian](#)