06/03/2023

HOMILY OF HIS BEATITUDE, THE POPE AND PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND ALL AFRICA, THEODOROS II, AT THE LITURGICAL CONCELEBRATION WITH HIS BEATITUDE THE METROPOLITAN OF KIEV AND ALL UKRAINE, EPIPHANIOS.



(Alexandria, March 5th, 2023)

Your Beatitude Epiphanios, Metropolitan of Kiev and Al Ukraine, beloved Brother, and Concelebrant in Christ,

With the Grace of the Incarnated Christ, we commune with You today in this beautiful Holy Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in the City of Alexander the Great and of the Saint Apostle and Evangelist Mark and, as members of the Lord’s Body, as members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, giving

the testimony of union of our Lord’s redemptive work in today’s turbulent world.

Today’s Patriarchal Concelebration of Primates coincides with the great feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy on the First Sunday of Holy and Great Lent. In the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, the invisible and visible ontological fact of the unity of all Orthodox believers, of the communion and unity between them, is simultaneously effected. At the same time, this Sacramental act echoes the fraternal and heartfelt relations between us, in Christ’s love, and cooperation for the glory of God and the good repute of His Most Holy Church.

It goes without saying that the unity of the Orthodox peoples should not be merely a verbal form. It is imperative that it has substantial meaning. Our unity is based on the foundation of faith, which is our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whose Holy Body is broken in the Holy Eucharist but is not divided. The unity of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, is based on the Divine and Sacred Canons, as declared by the Holy Ecumenical Synods and the Sacred Tradition and order of Orthodoxy formed over the centuries. The unity of the local Orthodox Churches is created mystically through the commemoration in the Diptychs of these Primates, during the consecration of the bread and wine into the Holy Body and Precious Blood of Christ in the common Cup. This supreme Mystery constitutes the A and the Ω in the teaching of Orthodoxy, as the Founder of the Church the Lord proclaims: “I am the A and the Ω, says the Lord God, the One who was and the one who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev. 1:8).

Your Beatitude and holy Brother,

The history and legacy of our ancient Church of Alexandria begins from the Apostolic times, from the preaching and of its foundation under the Evangelist Mark. The Egyptian City of Alexander the Great, established as the foundation of Christianity, became renowned for its monasticism and the formation of its ecumenical theological teaching of Christianity through the Fathers and Teachers of the Church under heaven, the Holy Archbishops of Alexandria. Monasticism emerged from the Church of Alexandria with Antony the Great being preeminent. From its cradle, monasticism then spread to Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, to the North and to the West. The first theological tradition of the ancient Church sprang from Alexandria and especially from its famous Catechetical School, which brought forward colossal spiritual figures, such as Clement, Origen, Pantaenus. They are followed by Athanasius the Great, Isidore of Pelusium, Synesius, the great Cyril and so many others. We are convinced that this is due to the universal recognition and fundamental contribution of the Apostolic Throne of Alexandria to the formation of the doctrinal teaching, as well as its missionary activity in recent years for the

evangelization of the blessed continent of Africa, the long-suffering land which for decades the martyred and missionary stoles of innumerable clerics of our Patriarchate touched for the illumination and relief of “those sitting in the land and shadow of death” (Mat. 4:16), our African brothers and sisters.

Nevertheless, Your Beatitude, at this solemn and unifying moment of communion between us, in the context of Your Peaceful visit to us, during which we welcome You as equal and Canonical Primate of a martyred Church, large in numbers, after the absolutely correct Canonical and rightful transfer of Autocephaly under the All-Holy Ecumenical Throne and its Serene Primate, His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Your Most Holy Metropolis of Kiev and all Ukraine. We do not hide the pain, which we bear in our hearts together with all the Hierarchy, the holy clergy, and the people of our Patriarchal jurisdiction, for the unreasonable, unbrotherly, vindictive, and therefore anti-Christian reaction of the Moscow Patriarchate towards us, because of this great ecclesiastical event, namely the Autocephalous status of Your Most Holy Church and our recognition of it.

The Moscow Patriarchate and its current Primate, arbitrarily and autocratically reacted to an ecclesiastical Act canonically established for centuries, that is why they predatorily and unlawfully invaded our geographically pastoral and spiritual jurisdiction in Africa, as “savage wolves not sparing the flock” (Acts 20,29), attempting to spiritually poison the vulnerable souls of our newly enlightened native children, in order to bring about the accursed disintegration of our Christian flock. In critical times for humanity and the Christian world, they consciously tear apart the unsewn tunic of Christ the Chief Shepherd, pouring out anger and bile towards the Senior Church of Alexandria, which “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings” (Matthew 23:37) benefited the Church of Russia by consolidating its own autocephalous status.

The brothers from the North deliberately forget the great benevolence of the Senior Patriarchal Thrones of the East, primarily the Apostolic Thrones of Constantinople and Alexandria, to assign autocephaly and Patriarchal honour and value to the Church of Rus, following the suffocating pressures of the monarch of the Russian kingdom, Tsar Fyodor I Ioannovich (1557-1598). They conveniently forget that it was through the signatures of our martyred Predecessors, Jeremias II Tranus of Constantinople (1536-1595), of Saint Meletius Pegas of Alexandria of blessed memory (1550-1601), who signed also on behalf of the Patriarch Joachim of Antioch, and with the participation of Sophronios of Jerusalem, that they received their coveted autocephaly. This was during the Great Synod, which met on February 12, 1593, in the Church of the Theotokos Paramythia of Constantinople,

under the presidency of Saint Meletios Pegas.

They irreverently forget that our Holy Predecessor finally proposed, during that Supreme Synod, the elevation of the Russian Church to a Patriarchate and its classification as of the same rank and co-throned among the Orthodox Churches, the exercise by it of Canonical parish jurisdiction over Russia and the far northern countries, its ranking as fifth in position of honour after the ancient Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the addressing of its Primate as “Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia and the far northern territories”.

They disrespectfully overlook that it was the intervention of the Patriarch of Alexandria St Meletios of Pegas, was of fundamental importance and value in the definitive resolution, in the canonical way, of the granting of the autocephaly to the Russian Church and in the once-and-for-all confirmation of the Canonical regularity of the Moscow Patriarchate. Unfortunately, however, the recent “punitive reprisals” against us on the part of our Russian brothers, because we simply stood canonically on the side of the established Autocephalous Ukrainian Church, prove in the most relentlessly realistic and indisputable way that no enemy is safer than the ungrateful receiver of benefits.

Worst of all, however, is the absolutely stale initial argument of the parochial Church in Russia, to justify the above blasphemous invasion of our Patriarchal jurisdiction: “it could not bear to turn a deaf ear to the pleas of our African flock, which, according to the falsely or artificially uttered words, it had a sensitive Orthodox conscience regarding our behaviour on the Ukrainian ecclesiastical issue, because we, as the Primates of the local Orthodox Churches were canonically and rightfully were in accord with the decisions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate regarding the Most Holy Church of Ukraine, therefore we became alleged schismatics”!!

Today, therefore, the Sunday of Orthodoxy of the salvific year 2023, we give in the most official way our own answer to every direction:

■ No Synodal Decision of a Senior Church gives the right to another Church – and especially a chronologically younger one – to violate the firm Holy Canons and commit intrusion into the parish jurisdiction of the first.

■ No Synodal Decision of a Senior Church gives the right to another Church – and especially a chronologically younger one – to develop innovative ecclesiological-political “theories” about spreading the Russian world around the globe based on nationality, completely unknown in Orthodox ecclesiology, which has already been condemned by the Synod of our Patriarchate.

All these ecclesiologically-sensitive issues we place before all the local Orthodox Churches their responsibility, expecting their immediate condemnation of these illegal and unholy actions and the unheard of ecclesiological and political “theories” of the Patriarchate of Moscow, may soon probably knock on their own doors with imaginary accusations, but with dramatic pan-Orthodox consequences.

We unequivocally condemn in the most categorical way all the above-described irregular actions of the Russian Church against our Patriarchate. “Plato is loved, but the truth is loved more!” (Aristotle)

Your Beatitude Epiphanios, of Kiev and All Ukraine,

Today we are experiencing an extreme period of transition, we are experiencing critical times of re-examining everything. The world is in a state of uncertainty and is anxiously searching for a new situation. Violence and war, poverty and destitution, the crisis of principles and values lead man to despair.

At precisely this crucial moment, the Church of Christ offers the world the testimony of the existence of the living God and the hope of the coming of the Kingdom of God in history. Faith in Christ essentially comes through faith in personal conscience. Man, as the image of God, has heavenly roots, is incomparably greater than the world and history. When they put him to death, he blesses his executioners by appealing to their conscience. He rejects violence to invoke the only revolution that does not lead to slavery: the revolution of self-awareness and integrity.

In closing, we thank the Triune God, who deemed us today to be together and partake of the banquet of faith. We respect Your honourable person, because You are patiently crucified with the fullness of Your Church, which is why You have won, both inside and outside Your homeland, the recognition of every person of good will, giving good testimony and being a gentle shepherd. We embrace in the Lord the concelebrating holy Hierarchs, all the venerable Hierarchs in Ukraine as well as the clergy and we paternally bless the noble and faithful Ukrainian people, praying that Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, the Lord of peace, will look down on this vine of our sister Autocephalous Church of Ukraine, deliver it from all suffering

and strengthen it for ever and ever. May it be so! Amen!