

14/12/2023

## **Speech by His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden at the Official Welcome for His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphaniy of Kyiv and All Ukraine at the St. George Cathedral of Stockholm**



Stockholm, December 13, 2023

Your Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphaniy of Kyiv and All Ukraine,

Your Excellencies,

Honorable Members of Your Entourage,

Beloved Brethren, Representatives of the local Orthodox Christian jurisdictions and Christian Denominations of Sweden and the other Scandinavian nations and the Nordic Region,

Reverend Clergy and Beloved Brethren in Christ Incarnate,

The Holy missionary Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia, this Exarchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the Northern Lands and the visionary city of Stockholm open their hearts today to welcome you with sentiments of ineffable joy and heartfelt emotion.

Your Beatitude,

Your presence here among us today represents a special blessing, because it affords us all the opportunity to venerate Your right hand and receive the blessing of the Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, as we admire its able helmsman, who is as unaffected as he is magnanimous, adorned with patience, sobriety, and prudence, tirelessly working in the service of the Gospel.

Your Beatitude,

In the doxology service that was just celebrated, we offered up heartfelt thanksgiving from this hallowed Cathedral of the great martyr St. George the Trophy Bearer to our Lord, Who is the source of all good things and the Founder of the Church, on the auspicious occasion of today's gathering and communion in Christ. Deeply moved, we now extend to You our deepest and most sincere "welcome!"

Your blessed presence here provides us with the opportunity to recall the inspired decision of the First Hierarchy of the Orthodox Church, His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, through whose actions and proposals, the Church of Ukraine was granted its Tome of Autocephaly in January 2019.

Allow me now to convey to You the heartfelt paternal blessings of His All-Holiness, who has shown his love, paternal care, and concern for the Church of Ukraine and Your Beatitude in manifold ways.

Your Beatitude,

We believe that the bonds between our Metropolis and my Humility personally, with both You and the Members of the Holy Synod of the Church of Ukraine resonate the sentiments of our love and support for You and the longsuffering people of Ukraine who are presently undergoing trials and tribulations.

Indicatively, I would like to highlight the visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Rivne and Ostroh last May, on the occasion of the art exhibition inspired by military equipment that was organized by the Armémuseum (The Swedish Army

Museum in Stockholm).

Moreover, I would like to make mention of our welcome and meeting with His Excellency Ukrainian Ambassador Andrii Plakhotniuk in Stockholm in May 2022, with whom we discussed many current events and timely issues, as well as visits being made by Ukrainian clergy to serve the liturgical needs of our Ukrainian-speaking brethren in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Iceland.

I would especially like to take this opportunity to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Vissarion of Spain and Portugal, with whose canonical permission, a Ukrainian clergyman under his omophorion will be sent to Norway and Stockholm this Christmas so that the Divine Liturgy may also be celebrated in Ukrainian.

Your Beatitude,

Now that the days are approaching when we will once again hear the angelic hymn "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will toward men" be chanted, I pray to the Trinitarian God of love, peace, and justice that the period of tribulations for long-suffering Ukraine be reduced so that you may soon enjoy the fruits of peace and reconciliation.

Your Beatitude,

Please bless our people so that they may continue their spiritual struggle in faith, hope, and patience, bearing witness to Jesus Christ unwaveringly and uncompromisingly, shining forth as a light for all to see!

In closing, allow me to welcome our Brethren who are present here today, beginning with the members of Your honorable entourage, His Excellency Metropolitan Yevstratiy of Bila Tserkva, the Rev. Deacon Fr. Andrii Sydor, and Your personal assistant Mr. Roman Labinskyi, as well as His Grace Bishop Pavlo Shvarts of the Lutheran Church of Ukraine and the Chairman of their Synod Rev. Oleksandr Grosse.

Furthermore, it is our great honor to welcome to our Cathedral Rev. Peter Lindvall, Head of the Ecumenical Department, the Rev. Dr. Christopher Meakin, Theological Secretary of the Lutheran Church of Sweden, as well as the chaplain of the Swedish Theological Institute in Jerusalem Rev. Karin Ekholm.

We also welcome the representative of the Lutheran Church of Norway, the Rev. Einar Tjelle, Ecumenical Secretary.

Joining us from the Lutheran Church of Iceland, we welcome His Grace Bishop

Kristjan Björnsson of Skalholt.

I fondly and gratefully remember the kind hospitality that the head of the Lutheran Church Bishop Agnes Sigurdardottir offered to the Ecumenical Patriarch and his Entourage during His first official visit to Iceland in 2017, as well as to my Humility, each time that I visit our Orthodox Christian brethren in Reykjavik.

We also welcome Rev. Misha Jaksic, representing the Christian Council of Sweden.

We also take this opportunity to welcome Greece's new Ambassador to Sweden Her Excellency Ekaterini Fountoulaki and the Ambassador of Cyprus to Sweden His Excellency Solon Savva.

Together with my Humility, joining us on behalf of our local Church is the Pastor of the Cathedral the Very Rev. Archimandrite Bartholomew Iatridis, representing our local clergy, Mrs. Athina Karapanagiotidou, representing the Cathedral Parish Council and Mrs. Olga Karapanagiotidou, Mr. Ilias Gergi & Eleftherios Stengos, Cathedral volunteers.

The presence and participation of all of you at today's official welcoming ceremony manifests the bonds of friendship and unity that exist between us, which are fruits which we boast of in the Lord.

Welcome, Your Beatitude and beloved Brethren! "May the Lord of peace Himself grant you peace always by all means" (2 Thess.). Amen!

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