



*Translated from Greek*

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**To His Beatitude, Holy Brother in the Lord,  
the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia  
KIRILL**

Dearest Brother in Christ and Co-celebrant,

*“My soul is sorrowful”*. A deep pain, worry and embarrassment engulf us too, as we follow the developments in the Ukraine issue, after the decisions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (11.10.2018) and of the Orthodox Church of Russia (15.10.2018), which You record in Your letter of the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 2018.

Unfortunately, they corroborate the fears we had expressed to the representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (30<sup>th</sup> of July 2018), namely that the currently planned granting of autocephaly to Ukraine will be a “march in a minefield” with painful repercussions for all.

At the same time, however, we ought to remark that the latest decision of the Church of Russia is also a source of great concern. It is unthinkable that the Divine Eucharist, the mystery par excellence of the infinite love and the utter humiliation of Christ, could be used as a weapon against another Church. Is it possible that the decision and order of the Hierarchy of the Church of Russia may cancel the energy of the Holy Spirit in the holy Orthodox churches that operate under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate? Is it possible that the Divine Eucharist performed in the Churches of Asia Minor, Crete, the

Holy Mountain, and elsewhere on earth, may now become unsubstantiated for the faithful Russian Orthodox? And if they come forth “with the fear of God, faith, and love” to partake of the Sacred Gifts, is it possible that they commit “a sin”, which they should confess?

We proclaim that it is impossible for us to agree to such decisions. It is imperative that the Holy Eucharist, this mystery of unfathomable sacredness and unique importance, remains far removed from all ecclesiastical disagreements.

However serious they may be, the accumulated questions of jurisdiction on no account may constitute a cause for a Schism of Orthodoxy, anywhere in the world. As we have repeatedly stressed, a possible SCHISM now, will tarnish the beauty of Orthodoxy, will weaken its international prestige, and will deeply hurt the faith of all Orthodox – especially those in the Ukraine, who are of immediate concern – who suffer continuous pressures from multiform atheism and are poisoned by indifference, spread around like radioactive dust.

It is, therefore, imperative to explore calmly a compromise, aiming at a deep and real pacification of the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine.

Regarding the Pan-Orthodox Synaxis that You mention in Your letter, we consider that the recent developments have made its convocation extremely difficult. The following questions remain crucial: Will the Orthodox Church of Russia ask the Ecumenical Patriarchate to convene a Pan-Orthodox Synaxis? What will be the criteria of a final decision in favour of peace and unity? The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania is, in any case, willing to participate in a Pan-Orthodox Synaxis, which will be convoked canonically.

You know our repeatedly mentioned conviction that the most blessed achievements of Orthodoxy during recent decades were the Synaxes of the Primates of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches. May we return to them, correcting the omissions and mistakes of the past.

The worry and embarrassment, which we initially formulated, are healed in a paracletic way by the psaltic verse: *“Why are thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance and my God”*. (Psalm 42:11).

Always in deep brotherly love  
In Christ our only Lord and Saviour

† *Anastasios*

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