



Jubilee Council of Ukrainian Orthodox Church held in Kiev

On July 8, upon the conclusion of the Bishops' Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Jubilee Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church took place at the refectory chamber of the church of Sts Anthony and Theodosius of the Caves in the Kiev Laura of the Assumption. It was chaired by His Beatitude Vladimir, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine.

After a thanksgiving, His Beatitude Vladimir greeted the participants of the Council.

Archbishop Mitrofan of Belaya Tserkov and Boguslavsk, chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, read out messages of greetings from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia and Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich.

The chairman of the Credentials Committee made a report on the Council's quorum. Present were 228 participants including 66 bishops, 47 married clergy, 67 monks and nuns and 49 lay members. Four persons were absent.

Metropolitan Vladimir made a report. Archbishop Mitrofan thanked the metropolitan on behalf of the Council for the work he had carried out to govern the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Summing up the work the Ukrainian Orthodox Church had carried out since her previous Council on June 26, 1992, the Council thanked God for His mercy expressed in the restoration of full-fledged church life after decades of atheistic persecution in the 20th century and approved the decisions made earlier by the Holy Synod and the Bishops' Councils of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The Council also approved the work of the Church's Synodal departments, ruling bishops, clergy and laity to revive churches and monasteries and develop missionary and educational activity and social service and charity.

The Council reaffirmed the devotional and canonical unity with the Russian Orthodox Church through which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is united with all the Local Orthodox Churches. It was acknowledged that the present canonical status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a self-governed Church with the rights of broad autonomy is a guarantee of the preservation of her internal unity and a foundation for restoring unity in Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

The Council thanked the Ukrainian state authority for good works and intentions, for having returned churches and monasteries and helped to restore them, while expressing hope that the tragic events of the stormy 90s of the 20th century became things of the past and authorities and statesmen would never again seek to use the Church in temporal earthly interests.

The Council members reaffirmed their willingness to develop further constructive church-state relations on the basis of partnership and mutual respect and for the benefit of the people and appealed to the President, Supreme Rada and Cabinet of Ministers to render assistance in solving a number of problems. Particularly, the Council deemed it necessary to adopt a new version of Ukraine's Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations so that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church could have an opportunity to obtain the status of legal entity and establish her own educational institutions on various levels. Participants also spoke in favour of introducing a course of basic Christian ethics, Orthodox culture and religious instruction in educational institutions on all levels and giving the Church an opportunity for participation in training teachers of religion, local history and ethics for both public and private schools.

The Council deemed it necessary to establish an effective system of protecting public morality and preventing the propaganda of licentiousness and sin. The participants called upon the state to support the development of information projects for religious education through television, radio and other mass media and to join the Church's efforts to overcome poverty and organize the service of the neighbor, to create a system of the army clergy and to support the further development of pastoral care in penitentiaries and hospitals. It was deemed necessary to introduce a moratorium on the privatization of former church property and to define mechanisms for its return for the sake of restoring justice and ensuring the Church's life and work and social and charitable service. The state was also asked to consider a possibility for returning or allocating land to monasteries and parishes for their agricultural work.

The Council called the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to pray more ardently for peace, tranquility and well-being of the Ukrainian people so that they *may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way* (1 Tim. 2:2).

The Council appealed to those brothers and sisters who had fallen away from the Mother Church and

stayed outside her grace-giving fold to repent and return to the house of the Father, to restore unity around the Eucharistic Cup, stressing that according to the biblical parable, one's return to one's own home is not humiliating or pitiful. It was reaffirmed that the stand of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church concerning the ways of overcoming the schism was a matter of principle not to be changed: restoration of the unity of Ukrainian Orthodoxy should take place in accordance with sacred canons without any interference from political forces and through the return of those fallen away into the fold of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church. All the members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church were called to lift up a continued prayer for the return of those who have fallen away, for termination of the strife, augmentation of love and restoration of unity commanded by the Lord.

With gratitude to God glorified in His saints, the Council noted that for the last 19 years the Ukrainian Orthodox Church canonized 260 new saints and called the clergy and laity to follow the example of the newly-glorified saints, to build churches and monasteries dedicated to them and to propagate their veneration.

A special mention was made of the need to build a Cathedral of the Resurrection and a Religious Education Center in Kiev.

In conclusion of the Council, His Beatitude Vladimir once again appealed to its members to keep love and mutual understanding.

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