

Letter of His Beatitude the Archbishop of Cyprus Hrysostomos to His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Your All-Holiness, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, beloved and profound brother and concelebrant, kyrios kyrios Bartholomew, we brotherly embrace you and address Your All-Holiness with joy.

With the present letter we communicate with Your All-Holiness with the intention to inform You about our position regarding the Ukrainian issue.

The insecure situation that prevails around the world, due to the coronavirus pandemic, and the troublous course of our health, due to the difficulties of movement of a leg, as well as the chemical treatment that I receive, make impossible the continuance of the mission You requested from me, to meet face to face with the rest of the Primates of the local Orthodox Churches, regarding the Ukrainian issue, even though it is also my wish to bring it to fulfilment.

As you well know, All-Holiness, the attitude of neutrality that we observed as the Church of Cyprus, had the sole purpose of the general good of Orthodoxy, and our desire was to help with all our mental strength the long suffering Ecumenical Patriarchate.

However, noticing the fruitlessness of my efforts, after much prayer and contemplation I decided, during my next Divine Liturgy, to commemorate the new Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Epiphaniy, according to Your expressed desire.

The position of neutrality that our Holy Synod took, was mainly a result of my personal opinion, because I believed and I still believe that the Church of Cyprus is an excellent example to emulate by all the local Orthodox Churches.

We may be a small Orthodox Church, but at the same time we are an apostolic Church, the establishment of which can be traced back to the first half of the first century.

Despite the continuous nuisances of the Antiochian Church, which claimed the prerogative of the ecclesiastical enforcement in Cyprus, beyond the political administrative influence, it never ordained for us any Bishop, priest, or deacon. The Church of Cyprus always remained autocephalous and self-governed. If we confirmed our autocephaly at the third Ecumenical Council, we did that in order to get rid of the nuisances of Antioch, and not because the recognition of the autocephaly of our apostolic Church was a necessity.

The Church of Cyprus, All-Holiness, is a very well-organized Church in every aspect. The hierarchy and the clergy is in a continuous contact with our people, not only through the holy services and the Holy Mysteries but also through the catechetical gatherings, camps, social and spiritual activities, maintaining, in this way, an excellent collaboration and approach with our flock, achieving an internal mission of high standards.

It should be noted, All-Holiness, that as much is the population of orthodox Cypriots living permanently in Cyprus, approximately 900.000, the same number of orthodox Cyprus emigrants lives abroad, in Europa, America, Canada, Australia, North Africa. And we can say with confidence that with the genuine cooperation of the Holy Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Church of Alexandria and the Church of Greece, even though we could have also offered our services to our emigrants, we are completely satisfied with the services that are already offered by the aforementioned Churches. There are many times when these local Churches request from us to send them clergymen from Cyprus to strengthen their activity in parishes where Cypriots also live.

This is what I would have mentioned to the other Primates as well, that by analogy, no other Orthodox Church has the same percentage of emigrants, outside its borders. This is a bright example of respect towards the ecclesiastical institutions and worthy of emulation by the rest of Churches.

Because, All-Holiness, for thirty years I represented the Church of Cyprus at the Panorthodox conferences, I know very well the point of view that all the Orthodox Churches have regarding the emigrants' issue. I sadly ascertained that, despite the decisions taken, none of them was respected. For example, the decisions that we took at the Great Council of Crete! Right after its conclusion the Church of Serbia ordained and appointed two metropolitans, one in Europe and the other in Australia, going against the dispositions and disdaining everything that was decided at the Great Council.

The occasional disagreements about alleged intervention of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Ukraine and about the concession of the Tomos of Autocephaly in the absence of the rest, I consider that are not valid, as those who protest are the first offenders.

Except the four Middle Eastern Churches, which are apostolic and do not need a Tomos for their Autocephaly, all other local Churches took their autocephaly after the 15th century and they owe it to the Tomos assigned to them by the Holy Ecumenical Patriarchate, which delimited their borders.

Every local Orthodox Church should and must remain within its borders, according to the Tomos that was received when they got their autocephaly, and not intervene by ordaining Bishops in provinces of another local Orthodox Church, if there are emigrants of the first one.

In the case that I could have visited personally the local Orthodox Churches, I would have stated with persistence, All-Holiness, to all the Primates that any arbitrary interference by the Russian Church within the borders of another local church (in Georgia, Ukraine, Poland, Romania), is forbidden by the canon law. Even more, its protests that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is interfering in its internal affairs is not justified.

Therefore, if we want the Orthodoxy to be at high spiritual standards, we have a duty to remain faithful and accurate regarding the borders that are indicated in the Tomos, and to serve with all our being the flock that was trusted to us by our Lord. In this way we will be respected by the other confessions, becoming an example to emulate.

This was from the beginning my wish and position. And if I held a neutral position on the Ukrainian issue, I did that wishing to instill this way of thinking to all the Primates, and beloved brothers in Christ, and to have a reconciliatory role for the sake of Orthodoxy's unity.

I repeat once more that my physical health does not give me the opportunity to continue this endeavor to have a face to face communication with the rest of the Primates at their seats.

If, however, there will be an improvement of my physical health, I will be at the disposal of Your All-Holiness.

On this occasion, we emphasize once more that the Church of Cyprus will continue to offer its support towards You All-Holiness, and towards the Holy Ecumenical Patriarchate, for the good and the dignity of our Orthodox Church.

Your All-Holiness beloved and brother in Christ

The Archbishop of Cyprus Hrysostomos

Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus,

20 October 2020