

The Kyivan Patriarchate Welcomes Efforts by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

Commentary on the UOCC delegation's visitation to Constantinople

“The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyivan Patriarchate welcomes efforts by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada for the benefit of Ukrainian Orthodoxy to overcome its divisions and artificial isolation,” stated Kyivan Patriarchate spokesperson Archbishop Yevstratiy, the Secretary of the Holy Synod, commenting on the results of the UOCC delegation's visit to Constantinople on February, 7-10, 2013.

“It is important for the Church in Ukraine overall, and particularly for the Kyivan Patriarchate, that the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and other Local Churches are aware of the truth about the situation in which Ukrainian Orthodoxy has found itself by receiving information, not only from the antagonistically-oriented Moscow Patriarchate. This gives the Local Churches an opportunity to take more suitable steps in resolving the so-called Ukrainian question,” Archbishop Yevstratiy stressed. “We hope that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada will assist in communicating this truth.”

The Patriarchate's spokesman noted that 20 years ago the Primate of the UOCC, Metropolitan Wasyly visited Ukraine, meeting with the hierarchs of the Ukrainian Churches and visiting various regions of the country. “Unfortunately, that mission did not continue. However, we in Ukraine hope that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada's positive past experience of working for the good of the Churches in the Ukrainian homeland will be resumed,” stated the Archbishop.

Archbishop Yevstratiy noted, “The Kyivan Patriarchate values the historical and spiritual heritage of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada and its unique identity. We hope that they maintain and develop this heritage. We are confident that the UOCC's future is in the hands of its hierarchs, clergy, and faithful, who by working together in the spirit of "sobornopravnist" (which involves joint clergy and laity representation in church governance) will bolster and develop its church life. There are persons and forces that wish to sow discord between our Church and the UOCC by propagating the viewpoint that the Kyivan Patriarchate, allegedly, is trying to subordinate the Church in Canada. This is not true. We have never made such attempts in the past, nor do we intend to do so now or in the future. We value and respect the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church of Canada and we are convinced that it should define its own future, independently and in a conciliar manner as it has been doing since its founding.”

The Archbishop also made note of some regrettable moments in relations between the two Churches. However, he commented that these moments ought to serve as a lesson, leading not to confrontation but to a better understanding of each other. “Last year, His Holiness Patriarch Filaret and I were in Canada as part of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches delegation,” the Archbishop remarked. “We were undoubtedly disappointed that, at that time, there appeared to be certain obstacles in communications between Orthodox Ukrainians in Canada and in the Motherland of Ukraine. But, God’s Almighty Providence can turn a negative into a positive outcome –Orthodox faithful in Canada, in particular, and Ukrainians, in general, were encouraged to work actively to overcome this irregular situation whereby, due to the Moscow Patriarchate’s hostile attitude, the children of a single Ukrainian nation and a single Orthodox Christian Church are unable to communicate freely with one another. I think that the visit of the UOCC delegation to Constantinople and its discussions with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew about Canadian issues as well as about the Ukrainian question is, to a certain extent, the product of further evaluation of last year’s events.”

On behalf of His Holiness, Patriarch Filaret, Archbishop Yevstratiy once again expressed gratitude to all members of the UOCC who participated in official and private meetings during the trip abroad as well as in Ukraine. “We are grateful to the organizers and participants for their warm reception, meetings and communications that took place in Canada last year and here in Ukraine. We are positive that this visit, despite certain difficulties, was beneficial and inspired the plenitude of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to reflect upon and ponder its next steps, its role in relation to the Church in the Motherland, and to begin a new page of positive relations between the Orthodox in Canada and in Ukraine,” the Archbishop stated.

“As a Church under the omophorion of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the UOCC in Canada has a unique opportunity to become an active intermediary in overcoming the divisions in Ukrainian Orthodoxy and recognising the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church in the homeland,” the hierarch observed. “We hope that the UOCC will take advantage of this opportunity for the good of Orthodoxy and for the good of Ukraine and all Ukrainian people. We hope that Metropolitan Yuriy, together with the hierarchs, clergy and faithful of the UOCC will

help us breach the wall of untruths and artificial isolation surrounding the Kyivan Patriarchate built by the forces in Moscow.”

“The Kyivan Patriarchate is open to cooperation with the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, Metropolitan Yuriy, the hierarchs, clergy and all of the faithful of the Church in Canada. We hope that the entire UOCC also will unite to help the Church in Ukraine and the Kyivan Patriarchate out of its artificial external isolation,” Archbishop Yevstratiy of Chernihiv and Nizhyn commented.

Press Centre of the Kyivan Patriarchate