

An open letter to His Eminence Metropolitan Yuriy Kalistchuk

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada

Winnipeg, Manitoba

June 28, 2012

Your Eminence,

Please, don't write us any more letters. Your letters cause us too much pain. Although your letter of April 19, 2012 was not addressed to all, it was divulged and cut us to the quick. Your letter published in the June issue of Visnyk/Herald, as a reply to our vehement reaction to that of April 19th, hurt us even more.

In the Visnyk issue you have quoted some fundamental principles of our Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, calling it over and again "Greek-Orthodox". Vladyko, it hasn't been "GREEK-Orthodox" since 1995 when it was officially changed to the present title. Initially it was called "Greek-Orthodox" (by analogy to "Greek-Catholic", denoting Ukrainian Catholic), because circa 1918 "Orthodox" meant "Russian" or "Moscovian".

In citing the fundamental principles of our Church you disdain them by subordinating them to the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch. You quote the proposed changes to our Statute as if they (the changes) had already been voted on and ratified. Not so! We are still waiting for the Ukrainian translation of the proposed amendments to our By-Laws, for we are Ukrainian and Sobornopravna church. We could not believe our eyes and our understanding, what we saw written.

Calling the Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople (actually Istanbul) the Mother-Church of our Orthodoxy, you ignore the fact that the Mother-Church of Ukrainian-Canadian Orthodoxy is the

Antiochian Church. When our leaders asked the Ecumenical Patriarchy for their blessing in 1918 for our developing church, the EC listened to us with a deaf ear and looked at us with a blind eye, just like they did with the Church of mainland Ukraine in the early 1920's. They did the same when they called you Bishop of Saskatoon until your very consecration as Metropolitan. They ignored your title as Bishop and Archbishop of Toronto for many years.

When you kowtow to them and subordinate our Canadian laws to theirs, you lead our Church into slavery. The founders of our UOCC did not want any subordination, not to Moscow, not to Rome, and, were it in our days, not to Istanbul, or Phanar, or Constantinople.

Do you read what you sign, Vladyko? Is God's gift of Free Will so unbearable to you that you wish to shift it onto somebody else, so that you can become just a humble monk in a monastery? If so, follow the dictates of your conscience regarding your own person, but don't lead into slavery our entire church, because the church is the people. The people had been in slavery and don't want to be in slavery any more.

What have the Greeks ever given to us? In the olden days they did not even send missionaries to our land Ukraine. King Volodymyr had to conquer their city and accept their princess for a wife, although he had plenty of his own, both wives and concubines. It was a matter of protocol...

After the Christianization of Ukraine (it was called Rus then), Greek monks constantly roamed among the Ukrainian aristocracy begging alms. Sometimes they gave little icons so-called "miraculous" in exchange. The icons were of questionable artistic merit. "Miraculous" they were made by the faith of our people.

But the remainder of Greek glory, the diplomats on Phanar are subjugating our holy Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, first your naive loving heart, then the title of our Bishop of Toronto, our laws, our property, our freedom of association...

It is time to stop this game, although they are polite to your face, It's time to show that you are the son of a great people, the descendant of wise pioneers. Our young people are taking interest in the spiritual upbringing of their children. They have read their history and are amazed by your behaviour. Ukraine is a sovereign State and has many branches of the Christian Church. If you wish to unite with one of them, fine, but examine carefully the activity of each. Which branch enhances the building of democracy in Ukraine, uses the Ukrainian language in its services and sermons, repairs and builds churches, publishes books, raises the morality of the people; which branch brings in busloads of thugs and takes away churches and terrorizes priests and leads the Ukrainian Church and State back into the embrace of Moscow, casts anathemas on those who do not kowtow to them... Examine their words and their deeds.

Actually, it was the dream of our Founders and of Metropolitan Ilarion to unite with the Orthodox Church in Ukraine when Ukraine became an independent state. Establish a truly EUCHARISTIC unity, without surrender of name, title, economy, eventually of our language. The unity that you are advocating leads us into slavery, but we want to belong only to our HEAVENLY PATRIARCH, the Holy Trinity, as did our ancestors.

With whom do you wish to live, Eminence, and what people to serve? The people of your roots or the Phanar diplomats who manipulate you and mock you behind your back? As proof of this, please note the correspondence in 1995 between Patriarchs Alexey of Russia and Bartholomew of 'Constantinople' (both Firsts), in which they co-ordinate their treatment of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, both in Ukraine and in the diaspora. Or the conference in Chambessy in 2009. Were you present at the conference at which they decided the fate of your/OUR church?

You seem to be already thinking in their manner – suggesting to us as title for our Bishop the name of a non-existent city of York. Honestly, who will sell you a ticket to Constantinople? The Ecumenical Patriarchate lives in the glory of long gone empire. Are you with them, awed by the bygone glory?

We pray for You, Your Eminence, and beg you to come down into the world of reality. Love your people, and seek mercy for us only from God.

With respect and Christian love,

Natalia Jemetz