

The Response to the Edict of the Russian True-Orthodox Church dated 20 October/2 November, 2016

The edict (ukaz) is dated November 2nd – received on November 5th, 2016

A few days ago I received an edict from the RTOC Synod which sends me into retirement and suspends me from priestly service. This edict contains false accusations, is unlawful according to its content and, hence is not to be complied with.

I will not enumerate the absurdity of the accusations, I will cite only one example of a false accusation: “You received Omsk clergy under your omophorion”. I never received a single Omsk clergyman under my omophorion. I am surprised that all three hierarchs signed the edict without verifying whether their secretary wrote the truth.

But the main reason why we cannot consider this edict to be lawful and valid is the fact that Archbishops Benjamin and Tikhon and Bishop Savvaty have trampled upon the fundamental basis of the Church of Christ – they have turned the CONCILIARITY (*sobornost'*) of the Church into a clandestine dictatorship. In March of this year Archbishop Tikhon and the RTOC Synod announced that their Hierarchical councils will be conducted in secrecy, behind closed doors and that the minutes of their meetings will be confidential, inaccessible not only for the clergy and the faithful, but also bishops whom they dislike despite the fact that the latter are **members of their synod**. This is nothing other than trampling on the conciliar structure of the Church!

“We adopted this decision”, writes Archbishop Tikhon on 2/15 March, 2016, “because we cannot reveal the details of the inner life of our church to outsiders, among whom there are many open enemies of the True Church”. Evidently I too am among those “open enemies”. For more than two years I was not permitted to see even a single copy of the minutes!

I wrote to the RTOC Synod back on the 30th of July of this year: “from that day when you stopped publicizing the minutes of meetings and thereby trampled upon the principle of conciliarity, you and your synod lost your legitimacy”. No response was made by the synod. Instead, the synod decided to get rid of me by presenting me with a lawless edict of suspension of priestly service. If an ecclesiastical divorce is granted to spouses by no other means than an ecclesiastical tribunal, even more so does the synod have no right to impose a suspension on a fellow bishop without an initial allegation and a hearing by an ecclesiastical court. Evidently, the synod feels that the Church Rules were not written for them.

In his edict he writes: “You have severed all ties with the Conciliar Orthodox Russian Church, which means with the Church of Christ as a whole.” No, I have **NOT** severed ties with those faithful to Christ and His Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, but the bishops Benjamin, Tikhon and Savvaty, who, in order to “save the Church” from some sort of unknown and imagined enemies, are attempting to replace the holy and salvific path of podvig of the New Martyrs and Catacomb Confessors of the Church of Russia with the ideology of the Sergianists: “We ourselves will oppress our own”!

If not all, then the majority of the faithful know of the persecutions over the last years against the Suzdal Church. Has anyone heard of similar persecutions against the RTOC?

At the end of the edict, the synod under the threat of deposing me, demands that I repent before the Synod of Bishops of the RTOC. I will be glad to repent, when all three RTOC bishops together with the secretary repent before the faithful Abroad for slander against our last First Hierarchy, the ever-memorable Metropolitan Vitaly.

The last words of my address to the RTOC Synod on 17/30 July, 2016: "Leave us in peace" evidently do not suit them.

Obviously they must suspend me in my priestly service and even, if need be, defrock me in order that they can assume ownership of all Abroad churches and communities , just as they did a few days ago with the Mission at the Lesna Convent in France.

I invoke peace upon everyone and God's blessing.

With love in the Lord,

+Bishop Stefan

26 October/8 November, 2016