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Lviv, 1 March 2004 (Translation from the Original Ukrainian Text)

## **ADDRESS OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE KYIV-HALYCH METROPOLITANATE TO THE CLERGY, MONKS AND FAITHFUL OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH CONCERNING THE VISIT OF CARDINAL WALTER KASPER TO MOSCOW**

Beloved in Christ!

The recent visit of Cardinal Walter Kasper to Moscow to consider, among other things, the affairs of our Church, especially the recognition of the Patriarchate of the UGCC, has become the subject of discussion not only in our country but also throughout the world. Many Greek Catholics have been troubled and, to some extent, indignant at the fact that a matter of the internal development of our Church was discussed not in Kyiv, Lviv or Rome, but in Moscow, and, most importantly, without our participation. We would like to say a few words in this regard, thereby answering numerous inquiries from our faithful.

Firstly, we would like to stress that we should keep our hearts and minds in prudent and wise disposition in any circumstances. Our conclusions should be based on thorough and unbiased analysis of the real facts. Our proposals to interested parties should contain not only fair criticism but also a positive vision of the ways out of the very complicated knot of contradictions. The talks in Moscow by no means negate the main line of development of the Patriarchate following from the decisions of the Synod of Bishops of our Church. We chose this path long ago and it reflects the clear will of the people of God of our Church. In addition, what happened may also have positive consequences. The public attention attracted by the mentioned visit may give impetus to a more thorough study of the arguments of the UGCC. And, taking into account that no one will represent our position better than ourselves, we should do it with a clear mind and with a heart not shadowed by anxiety.

We are firmly convinced of our own identity. A distinctive feature of our Church is that, though it received its ecclesiastical formation from Byzantium, it was and always sought to be in communion with the successor of St. Peter the Apostle, the bishop of Rome. Our ancestors stressed this as early as at the Union of Brest at the end of the 16th century. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church not only has a rich and long history going back to the time of Volodymyr's baptism, but also maintains and develops an old theological, legal and spiritual tradition and has a complete hierarchy. According to canon law, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is a particular Church and not a part of some other Church, and, therefore, it develops in accordance with its ecclesial nature.

There were many difficult periods in the history of our Church when attempts were made to send it out of its native land, when its right to existence was denied, when attempts were made to physically destroy it

or restrict it by administrative measures to the extent that it would gradually vanish. We have survived despite all these cruel measures. It must have been God's arm that supported us in the worst moments of our history and that gives us opportunities to successfully develop today.

One of the expressions of this development, of this desire to be fully ourselves, to revive all necessary elements of church life, is our wish to be recognized as a patriarchate. This is not a whim of the present day. The idea of the Patriarchate of the Kyivan Church can be traced back at least to the 16 and 17th centuries, when far-seeing church figures sought to unify all Ukrainian Christians in one Church in the form of a patriarchate. This concept has an interesting history: in the course of time, it was as if it went into decline and then clearly manifested itself again. In the 1960s, at the Second Vatican Council, it was distinctly made public by Patriarch Josyf Slipyj of holy memory, and it has been continuously developing ever since. And today, we, the bishops of the Kyiv-Halych Metropolitanate of the UGCC, are deeply convinced that such an arrangement is necessary for strengthening the unity of Church and people and the appropriate development thereof. This position was expressed by all the bishops of our Church at the Synod of 2002 and today we only await its recognition by the Holy Father.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, from the beginning of his pontificate, stood up for our Church and proved thereby that it was dear to his heart. Even in communist times, at an international forum representatives of the Roman Apostolic See at the Pope's instruction defended our right to exist. Ten years before the celebration of the thousandth anniversary of the Baptism of Kyivan Rus, our bishops informed the Holy Father about their wish to commemorate this event. He very gladly blessed that intention and, in answer to the protest of representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, confirmed our main right, the right to exist, in his letter of 1979. Later, in 1988, the Pope personally participated in our celebration, which still had to be held on the territory of Rome. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, His Holiness Pope John Paul II greeted our bishops who had been active in the underground Church and urged them to develop it. And recently, in 2001, despite various protests, he visited Ukraine and gave his pastoral addresses to us on more than one occasion. It was on his instruction that Cardinal Walter Kasper, who is responsible for relations with non-Catholic Christian Churches, presented the case of our Church to the Moscow Patriarchate in 2003. It was a delicate gesture on the part of the Pope, as he mentioned the possible recognition of the patriarchate of the UGCC in advance.

Unfortunately, the responses from the Moscow Patriarchate and other Orthodox Churches often contained expressions which should be considered inappropriate for interchurch dialogue. It is enough to mention the statement that the Roman Catholic Church should "gradually reduce the presence" of our Church. These warnings, like ultimatums and verging on blackmail, saying that any possible contacts between Catholics and Orthodox will be broken off for years if the Pope recognizes the Patriarchate of the UGCC, sound like a personal insult to the Holy Father.

Such a reaction is very distressing, as it indicates that the leaders of the Orthodox Churches are not prepared to resolve historic contradictions by considering the legitimate needs of all interested parties. We hope that in the future those Orthodox circles which are prepared for constructive cooperation and understanding will express their opinions as well.

Still, it is not enough today to maintain that the legitimate development of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church cannot be the subject of diplomatic sanctions. We have to calmly and confidently work on the development of our own particularity and deepen our understanding of the patriarchal structure without concentrating solely on its external aspects. We are convinced that the patriarchal system is good both for us and for other Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches. Only when we are ourselves, that is, when we act as a particular Church, will we be able to fulfill our ministry for the good of the Universal Church. Holding unbiased, equitable and multilateral talks on the normalization of interchurch relations, especially with regard to the further development of the Eastern Catholic Churches, may give renewed impetus to an

ecumenism of partners, which will be incompatible with discrimination and suppression. However, an ecumenism which is worthy of the name cannot be limited to endless and solely verbal relations, which are susceptible to the mood of the time. Ecumenism must be manifested in concrete and continuous works, which would indicate the partners' good will.

The patriarchal status of the Church is not just a decree of the Synod of Bishops confirmed by the Holy Father's recognition. This status is, above all, the transformed life of the People of God, who are aware of their new duties and responsibilities. From a certain point of view, the current discussions about the Patriarchate of the UGCC are a sign from the Holy Spirit that we should firmly confirm this Patriarchate in the life of the whole Church. At the same time, the life of the Church is the work of God. Therefore, notwithstanding all our speculations and efforts, we should rest our hope upon the Lord. We hereby sincerely ask you for your prayers and fasting for this intention.

May God's blessing be upon you!

In the name of the Synod of Bishops of the Kyiv-Halych Metropolitanate

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