

## **UOC-KP Pilgrims advised by the Patriarch of Jerusalem on their actions after bestowal of the Tomos**

### **Culture**

Posted by:

Posted on : 2018/6/22 15:22:03

**“His Beatitude told us that he was aware of the events in Ukraine, he follows them, cares about the problems of Ukraine, the pain and suffering of our people, divided by different churches.”**

From RISU: A group of pilgrims from Ukraine who were on the pilgrimage to the holy places in the Holy Land to pray for Ukraine and the Ukrainian Church met with the head of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church, Patriarch Theophilus III [pictured], on June 12, 2018, according to the website of the UOC-KP. The pilgrims conveyed the appeal to the Jerusalem land asking the Patriarch of Jerusalem to pray for Ukraine and support the Ecumenical Patriarchate in its intentions to provide autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Several thousands of well-known and ordinary citizens of Ukraine had signed up on this appeal in a few days. This appeal with the original signatures thereon was passed by the pilgrims into the hands of Patriarch Theophilus. The audition took place in the Jerusalem Patriarchate, in the hall where ceremonial events and meetings of the Synod of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church took place. “His Beatitude told us that he was aware of the events in Ukraine, he follows them, cares about the problems of Ukraine, the pain and suffering of our people, divided by different churches.” The Patriarch stressed that the main weapon of a Christian is prayer and patience. If the politicians are trying to get a quick result, because they need the immediate realization of their swift-changing plans, in cases where the Church is resolving the case, one must think about God's will and a long future. The Patriarch pointed out it was his reasonable conviction that obtaining independence by the Ukrainian Church cannot, by itself, solve all the problems of Ukraine and will not solve the problems of Ukraine. Therefore, the Christians of our nation must be prepared for those works that we will have to accomplish for a long time after receiving Tomos on autocephaly. And we must solve these problems in a Christian way, in the spirit of love, prayer and firm belief in the Lord hearing our prayers. His Beatitude Theophilus gave an example of the history of Cyprus: the island, which in the 20th century. It was divided into two parts. Those tragic events for Cyprus were the result of the actions of politicians, in particular, from Moscow. The consequences of those political events last to this day, and people still suffer from these consequences. According to His Beatitude Theophilus, the situation in Ukraine is very similar to what happened in Cyprus.” Pilgrims told Patriarch Theophilus about life in Ukraine. In particular, the huge number of Orthodox communities, priests and lay people who are now facing the division of church jurisdiction, expect Tomos to receive autocephaly. In their opinion, the bestowal of the Tomos will be the stone on which the unity of the Christian people of Ukraine will be built, strengthened and enhanced. The pilgrims also told the Patriarch that the rapid changes were taking place in Ukraine, in its spiritual and cultural life. In particular, they referred to the struggle Ukraine conducts for the revival of its culture and identity; about how, during the Soviet times, Russification was conducted in Ukraine: the absolute majority of schools and higher educational establishments were Russian-speaking. It was noted that the services of God in the churches were broadcast in Russian, there were no textbooks or liturgical books published in the language native to the Ukrainian people. It was through the efforts of ordinary Christian people that the first publisher of

spiritual and ecclesiastical literature was created, which began to print prayer books and liturgical books in Ukrainian. These books provided an opportunity to pray and serve God in their native language, and helped to revive the Ukrainian language and culture as a whole. If, at the time of the publication of the first such prayer book, in the early 1990's, an absolute majority of schools in Ukraine taught children in Russian, then today more than 90% of Ukrainian schools raise Ukrainian children. Similar changes, said pilgrims, should also take place in the Church, because the church identity is an integral part of the identity of the people. Pilgrims asked Patriarch Theophilus to sincerely pray for Ukraine, to support the efforts and prayers of Ukrainians for peace and provide independence to the local Orthodox Church in Ukraine. They offered to Patriarch Theophilus a prayer book in Ukrainian as a present, which millions of Ukrainian families use at home, a golden embroidered Ukrainian towel and a ceramic candlestick-fish, made by the hands of Ukrainian folk artists. According to the report, Patriarch Theophilus blessed the pilgrims, thanked for their work in the care of the unity of the Ukrainian people and the Church of Christ and presented to each pilgrim an icon of the Virgin Mary of Jerusalem.

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