



HOLY ASSEMBLY OF BISHOPS
OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

ASno. 3/rec.9
23 September 2002
Belgrade

To
His Eminence
Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje
kyr kyr John

Your Eminence,

With brotherly love we inform Your Eminence that the Holy Assembly of Bishops reached this decision at the meeting held under the above given number and date:

“In accordance to its previous decisions (ASno. 6/59 rec. 57 from 17 June, 1959 and ASno. 50/rec.7 from 15 September, 1967) and in accordance with the agreements and proposals of the Commission of the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Commission of the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church concluding with the Draft Agreement on establishing church unity, passed in Nis on 17 May 2002, and confirmed by the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church (ASno.38/rec.16 from 23 May 2002), the Holy Assembly of Bishops:

1. once again confirms the canonical status of the widest possible autonomy for the Orthodox Church in the Republic of Macedonia, that is, the Ohrid Archbishopric, under the conditions foreseen by the Nis Draft Agreement on establishing church unity;
2. with great regret concludes that, unlike the Holy Assembly, the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church has never officially and responsibly expressed its attitude regarding the proposals of the relevant mutual Commissions;
3. with reference to that, the Holy Assembly is astonished by the decision no.161 from 6 July 2002 of the Holy Synod of Macedonian Orthodox Church (and the subsequent letters of the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, kyr Stephen to His Holiness the Patriarch of Serbia, kyr Paul) with which the eparchial bishop of the eparchy of Veles and Povardarje, His Eminence, the Metropolitan kyr John “is suspended from duty” only because he accepted liturgical and canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church and with the entire orthodox ecumene, a unity confirmed by the Assembly; that decision is as much inconceivable as it was reached with no trial, contrary to the full canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church; thereby, among other things, the decision was reached by the three bishops, who as members of the Commission of the Macedonian Orthodox Church had signed personally the very same Draft

Agreement in Nis, which was the reason why Metropolitan John was deprived of his Episcopal cathedra;

4. again with regret ascertains that the violence committed over His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje kyr John, provoked by that uncanonical decision, the eviction of the same from his Episcopal seat and Eparchy, as well as from the monastery of St. George near Negotino, represents an utmost violation of the ecclesiastical and canonical rights, as well as of the basic human rights by the Holy Synod and the state authorities of the Republic of Macedonia;
5. because of the above given reasons, with consent of all the local orthodox Churches, declares the given decision of the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church to be invalid, considering it uncanonical and uneccelestiastical and still recognizes His Eminence the Metropolitan John as canonical episcope of the eparchy of Veles and Povardarje;
6. with brotherly love asks the Holy Synod of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, in the shortest possible period after the delivery of this act, to annul its decision no.161 from 6 July 2002, and to allow His Eminence, the Metropolitan kyr John, who is recognized as canonical episcope by this Assembly, back into His Eparchy; and thereby appoints His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje, kyr John, an Exarch of the Archbishop of Pec and Patriarch of Serbia for all eparchies of the Ohrid Archbishopric, with all rights for officiation, service and teaching, emphasizing that this decision will be valid until the full establishment of the canonical order in accordance with the autonomous status of the Ohrid Archbishopric
7. expresses its readiness for further fraternal dialogue for establishing full liturgical and canonical unity of the Ohrid Archbishopric, that is, the Macedonian Orthodox Church, with the Serbian Orthodox Church and with the entire orthodox ecumene; if the present hierarchy does not fulfil its mentioned canonical duty and does not express willingness and readiness to cooperate with the Serbian Orthodox Church and consequently with the orthodox ecumene, the Assembly will be forced to undertake further canonically justified steps towards the establishment of the canonical order in the Orthodox Church in the Republic of Macedonia at its first regular meeting
8. it also appoints the Holy Synod of Bishops to compose and to send an appropriate reply to the Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, kyr Stephen referring to his Announcement to the public and the letter sent to His Holiness, the Patriarch of Serbia, kyr Paul and to the other primates of the local Churches, full of canonical and historical vagueness and inaccuracies
9. it also appoints the Holy Synod of Bishops to ask the highest governmental agencies of the Republic of Macedonia to enable His Eminence, the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje, kyr John, an undisturbed return to his Eparchy and performance of his regular episcopal duties in accordance with the positive legislation of his country and with the commonly accepted standards of international law.”

It is an honour to inform Your Eminence about the previous decision of the Holy Assembly of Bishops.

Your Eminence's brother in Christ,

President of the Holy Assembly of Bishops
AEM and Patriarch of Serbia
+Paul