



Αριθμ. Πρωτ. 1127

Ἱερώτατε Μητροπολίτα Ολομους καί Βrno, ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ λίαν ἀγαπητέ καί περιπόθητε ἀδελφέ καί συλλειτουργέ τῆς ἡμῶν Μετριοτήτος κύριε Συμεών, χάρις εἴη τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ Ἱερότητι καί εἰρήνη παρὰ Θεοῦ.

Τυχάνει γνωστόν καί ἐπιμεμαρτυρημένον, ἐκ τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας ἀλλά καί ἐκ τῆς ἀνά τούς αἰῶνας μέχρι σήμερον πορείας τῆς στρατευομένης Ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ὅτι ὁ καθ' ἡμᾶς Ἀγιώτατος Ἀποστολικός καί Πατριαρχικός Οἰκουμενικός Θρόνος, πρὸς τοῖς ἄλλοις προνομίοις καί εὐθύναις αὐτοῦ, κέκτηται καί τὴν ὀφειλετικὴν κανονικὴν διακονίαν καί μέριμναν ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐσταθείας καί κατὰ Θεὸν εὐημερίας καί τῆς ἀπροσκόπτου συνεχίσεως τῆς σωτηριώδους διακονίας πρὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον πασῶν τῶν κατὰ τόπους Ἀγιωτάτων Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν, ἐνεργεῖ δὲ πάντοτε τὸ πρέπον μετὰ τῆς δεούσης συνεπειᾶς πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου κανονικῆς τάξεως καί παραδόσεως καί ὑπηρετεῖ τὸ καλῶς ἐννοούμενον συμφέρον εἴτε διὰ τὴν πρόληψιν εἴτε καί διὰ τὴν θεραπείαν πάσης ἐνδεχομένης ἢ πιθανῆς παρεκκλίσεως ἐκ τῶν καθιερωμένων ὁρίων, ἃ ἔθεντο οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν καί ἐπέκύρωσε συνοδικῶς ἐν Ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι ἡ Ἐκκλησία.

Συμφώνως πρὸς τὴν κανονικὴν καί ἐκκλησιολογικὴν ἀρχὴν ταύτην, ἡ Μήτηρ Ἁγία τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλῃ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀξιολογήσασα ἐν καιρῷ αἴτημα τοῦ ἐν μακαριστοῖς Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Πράγας καί πάσης Τσεχίας καί Σλοβακίας κυροῦ Δωροθέου, ἀποκλειστικῶς κανονικῶς εὐθυνοφόρῳ δικαίωματι χρωμένη, ἔκρινεν ὅτι ἡ ἐν Τσεχία καί Σλοβακία Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐκκλησία ἐπλήρου τότε πάντα τὰ προβλεπόμενα κανονικὰ κριτήρια διὰ τὴν ἀνύψωσιν αὐτῆς εἰς αὐτοκέφαλον καί αὐτοδέσποτον Ἐκκλησίαν, ἐπηλύγησε δὲ ἐν ἔτει 1998ῳ διὰ Πατριαρχικοῦ ἡμῶν καί Συνοδικοῦ Τόμου τὸ αὐτοκέφαλον αὐτῆς.

Ἡ Μήτηρ Ἐκκλησία τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, σὺν τῇ μεταδόσει τοῦ φωτός τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἀληθείας πρὸ δώδεκα σχεδόν αἰῶνων εἰς τοὺς λαοὺς τῶν χωρῶν τούτων, καθὼς καί τῆς ὅλης εὐρυτέρας Μοραβίας, προβάσα, ὡς γνωστόν, καί εἰς πάσας τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας καί κανονικὰς πράξεις, μετὰ πολλῶν θυσιῶν καί κινδύνων ὠκοδόμησε τὴν αὐτοκέφαλον Ἐκκλησίαν τῆς Τσεχίας καί τῆς Σλοβακίας, ὥστε ἐπὶ στερεῆς πέτρας καί βάσεως νὰ συνεχίσῃ νὰ πορεύηται αὕτη τὴν σωτηριώδη ἀποστολὴν αὐτῆς, ἐν ὠριμότητι, εἰς οἰκοδομὴν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ, τῶν Ὁρθοδόξων πιστῶν.

Ἡ Μήτηρ Ἐκκλησία, παρακολουθοῦσα ἐκ τοῦ σύνεγγυς πάντοτε μὲν, ὡς μαρτυρεῖ ἡ μακρὰ μετὰ τῶν δύο Ἐκκλησιῶν ἀλληλογραφία, ἰδίᾳ δὲ τελευταίως τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς ὑποβολῆς τῆς παραιτήσεως τοῦ μέχρι πρό τινος ἐπὶ κεφαλῆς τῆς αὐτόθι Ἐκκλησίας Μακ. Ἀρχιεπισκόπου κυρίου Χριστοφόρου ἐξελισσομένην οὐχί, ὡς θὰ ἀνεμένετο, ὁμαλῶς ἐκκλησιαστικὴν κατάστασιν, κατέβαλε πᾶσαν προσπάθειαν ἐνισχύσεως τῆς Ἱεραρχίας, τοῦ κλήρου καί τοῦ λαοῦ εἰς ἐνότητα.

Ἡ δέ ἡμετέρα Μετροπότης ἀπέστειλε κατ' ἀρχάς ὡς Ἐξαρχον αὐτῆς τόν Ἱερώτατον Μητροπολίτην Γαλλίας κύριον Ἐμμανουήλ, προσκληθεῖσα πρὸς τοῦτο ἐπισήμως, συμφώνως πρὸς τόν Θ' ὄρον τοῦ Τόμου Αὐτοκεφαλίας, διὰ τοῦ ἀπὸ 10ης Ὀκτωβρίου ἐ. ἔ. γράμματος τῆς ὑμετέρας Ἱερότητος, ὑπὸ τὴν ιδιότητα τοῦ Τοποτηρητοῦ, αἰτησαμένης τὴν "συμπλήρωσιν τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ τῶν Ἱεραρχῶν - μελῶν τῆς Ἱεραῆς Συνόδου τῆς Ἐκκλησίας (ὑ)ῆμῶν, ὥστε αἱ ἀποφάσεις αὐτῆς νά πληρῶσι τὰς ἐπιταγὰς τῶν Ἱερῶν Κανόνων τῆς Ἁγίας ἡμῶν Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας", αἵτινες ἀποφάσεις ἀφεῶρων εἰς τὴν πλήρωσιν τῆς χηρευούσης Ἱεραῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς Πράγας, μὴ καταστᾶσαν ἐν τέλει δυνατὴν λόγῳ μὴ πληρώσεως τῶν προβλεπομένων ὑπὸ τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων κριτηρίων ὡς πρὸς τοὺς προταθέντας ὑποψηφίους διὰ τὴν θέσιν ταύτην, ὡς ὑποβάλλει ἢ αὐτοῦ Ἱερότης, ὁ Μητροπολίτης Γαλλίας, ἐν τῇ ὑποβληθείσῃ ἡμῖν ἐκτενεῖ καὶ λεπτομερεῖ ἐκθέσει αὐτοῦ.

Ὁμολογοῦμεν, ἀδελφέ, ὅτι ἡ Μήτηρ Ἐκκλησία λυπηθεῖσα διὰ τὴν τοιοῦτοτρόπως ἐξελιχθεῖσαν, οὐχὶ ὡς ἀνεμένετο καὶ ὡς θὰ ἔδει, κατάστασιν, ἐσυνέχισε τὸ ὀφειλετικὸν στοργικὸν ἐνδιαφέρον αὐτῆς, καὶ ἀνταποκριθεῖσα καὶ αὐθις εἰς τὴν διὰ τοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς 22ας Ὀκτωβρίου ἐ. ἔ. γράμματος πρόσκλησιν τῆς ὑμετέρας Ἱερότητος ἀπέστειλεν, ἡμετέρα προτάσει καὶ ἀποφάσει Συνοδικῇ, ὡς Παρατηρητὰς καὶ Συμβούλους τοὺς Ἱερωτάτους ἀδελφούς Μητροπολίτας Γαλλίας κύριον Ἐμμανουήλ καὶ Αὐστρίας κύριον Ἀρσένιον, οἵτινες καὶ παρέστησαν εἰς τὰς ἐργασίας τῆς συνελθούσης τῇ 9ῃ Δεκεμβρίου ἐ.ἔ. Ἱεραῆς Συνόδου τῆς Ἁγιωτάτης Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Τσεχίας καὶ Σλοβακίας, αἰφνιδίως ἐμφανισθέντων, ἄνευ προσκλήσεως, διαρκουσῶν τῶν ἐργασιῶν τῆς Συνόδου ἐκπροσώπων καὶ τῆς Ἁγιωτάτης Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ρωσσίας –διερωτώμεθα ἐν ποίᾳ κανονικῇ ἄραγε ἀρμοδιότητι; (διατί δὲν ἐκλήθησαν ἐν τοιαύτῃ περιπτώσει καὶ ἐκπρόσωποι τῶν ἄλλων κατὰ τόπους Ὁρθοδόξων Ἐκκλησιῶν);-, ὡς ἐπληροφορήθημεν ἐξ ἀναφορᾶς τῶν εἰρημένων ἐκπροσώπων ἡμῶν.

Ἐπικοινωνοῦντες, λοιπόν, καθηκόντως καὶ ἐν τῇ ιδιότητι ἡμῶν ὡς Προκαθημένου τῆς Μητροῦς ὑμῶν Ἐκκλησίας καὶ ὡς ὑπέχοντος ἐν τούτῳ εὐθύνην, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀγαπητὴν Ἱερότητα διὰ τῶν μετὰ χεῖρας ἐγκυκλίων Πατριαρχικῶν ἡμῶν Γραμμάτων διαδηλοῦμεν τὴν ἐκπληξιν καὶ τὴν ἀπορίαν διὰ τὰ γενόμενα καὶ πρότερον μὲν, ἰδίᾳ ὅμως κατὰ τὴν τελευταίαν συνεδρίαν τῆς Ἱεραῆς Συνόδου τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας Τσεχίας καὶ Σλοβακίας, τῆς καταστάσεως ὀξυνθείσης μέχρι τῆς παύσεως τῆς ὑμετέρας Ἱερότητος ἀπὸ τῆς θέσεως τοῦ Τοποτηρητοῦ οὐχὶ διὰ κανονικῶν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον δι' ἀδιαφανῶν καὶ ἀδιευκρινήστων διαδικασιῶν, ὡς διὰ γραμμάτων ὑμῶν κατηγγείλετε τῷ πληρώματι τῆς αὐτόθι Ἐκκλησίας καὶ εὐρύτερον τὰ γενόμενα οὐχὶ κατὰ τὴν κανονικὴν τάξιν καὶ ἀκρίβειαν, μὲ ἀποτελέσμα νά ἐπαπειλῆται, ὡς διαθρολεῖται, -ἂν μὴ ἐδημιουργήθη ἤδη ἐν τῇ πράξει- ἢ δημιουργία σχίσματος ἐν τοῖς κόλποις τῆς κατὰ Τσεχίαν καὶ Σλοβακίαν Ἐκκλησίας, ὅπερ ὀλέθριον τόσον διὰ τὸν ἱερόν θεσμόν αὐτῆς, διὰ τὸν ἐμπεπιστευμένον αὐτῇ Ὁρθόδοξον λαόν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῆς Μιᾶς καὶ Ἐνιαίας Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας πρὸς τὸν κόσμον.

Θά συμφωνήσῃ ἀσφαλῶς καί ἡ ὑμετέρα Ἱερότης ὅτι αἱ μὴ δυνάμεναι ἄλλως νά χαρακτηρισθοῦν ἐνέργειαι αὐταὶ ἀποτελοῦν ἐνδείξεις μὴ ὑγιоῦς λειτουργίας τοῦ Συνοδικοῦ Θεσμοῦ καί τοῦ αὐτοδιοικήτου πολιτεύματος μιᾶς Ὁρθοδόξου Αὐτοκεφάλου τοπικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, γεγονός ὅπερ προκαλεῖ ποικίλα ἐρωτηματικά καί ἀπορίας εἰς ἐμβριθεῖς κανονολόγους, θεολόγους καί Ἱεράρχας, ὀδηγεῖ δέ εἰς τό συμπέρασμα ὅτι τό αὐτοκέφαλον τῆς ὑμετέρας αὐτόθι Ἐκκλησίας δοκιμάζεται, ἅτε μὴ πληρουμένων τῶν σχετικῶν κανονικῶν κριτηρίων, ἐν τῶν ὁποίων καί δὴ βασικώτατον εἶναι ἡ ἱκανότης αὐτοκεφάλου τινός Ἐκκλησίας ὅπως αὐτοδιοικῆται διὰ τῆς Ἱεραρχίας αὐτῆς, οὔσης ὠρίμου καί ἱκανῆς ὅπως ἀναδεικνύη κανονικῶς τὰ μέλη αὐτῆς καί τόν μεταξύ αὐτῶν πρόεδρον καί πρῶτον αὐτῆς, ἥτις ἱκανότης ἐν προκειμένῳ ἐκ τῶν συμβάντων τίθεται ἐν ἀμφιβόλῳ. Τό γεγονός τοῦτο ὀδηγεῖ τήν Μητέρα Ἐκκλησίαν εἰς τήν δυσχερῆ θέσιν τῆς ἀναζητήσεως ἄλλων τρόπων ἀντιμετωπίσεως τῆς δημιουργηθείσης καί ὀξυνομένης ὀσημέραι ἐκρύθμου καταστάσεως, συμφώνως πρός τούς θείους καί ἱερούς κανόνας καί τήν μεμαρτυρημένην ἱστορικῶς παράδοσιν τῆς Ἐκκλησίας.

Ἡ δημιουργηθεῖσα καί ἐξελισσομένη κατάστασις αὕτη ἀνησυχεῖ μεγάλως, ἐπαναλαμβάνομεν, τό Οἰκουμενικόν Πατριαρχεῖον, τό ὁποῖον εἰς τοσαύτας θυσίας προέβη διὰ τήν ἐν ἀκμῇ πρόοδον καί κατά Θεόν εὐημερίαν τῆς τοπικῆς ὑμῶν Ἐκκλησίας, ἐφ' ᾧ καί προτρέπομεθα καί ἀξιοῦμεν μετά τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Χρυσοστόμου «Ἐκκλησία συστήματος καί συνόδου ἐστίν ὄνομα» (Εἰς τόν ρμθ' Ψαλμόν, P.G. 55,493) καί ὑπομιμνήσκομεν ὑμῖν τούς λόγους αὐτοῦ ὅτι οὔτε τό αἷμα τοῦ μαρτυρίου δέν θά καταστῆ ἱκανόν καί δέν θά ἀρκέσῃ νά ἐξαλείψῃ τήν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ σχίσαι τινά τήν Ἐκκλησίαν.

Ὅθεν, καλοῦμεν ἅπαντας τούς ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφούς τούς ἀποτελοῦντας τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἱερᾶς Συνόδου τῆς κατά Τσεχίαν καί Σλοβακίαν Ἀγιωτάτης Ὁρθοδόξου Αὐτοκεφάλου Ἐκκλησίας ὅπως ἀναλογισθῶσι τὰς ἅς ὑπέχουν καί ἐπωμίζονται ἐνώπιον Θεοῦ καί ἀνθρώπων εὐθύνας καί, στοιχοῦντες τοῖς καθομολογηθεῖσι κατά τήν εἰς Ἐπίσκοπον ἕκαστος χειροτονίαν αὐτοῦ, συνεργήσωσι τό κατά δύναμιν, ἵνα μὴ εἴπωμεν τό ὑπέρ δύναμιν, ἕκαστος, ἐν ἀγάπῃ Χριστοῦ, ἐν συναλληλίᾳ, ἐν συνεργασίᾳ καί ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ, εἰς τήν ρύθμισιν τῶν ἀπασχολούντων τήν προσφιλῆ τοπικῆν ὑμῶν Ἐκκλησίαν ταύτην σπουδαίων περιστασιακῶν ζητημάτων, ἥτοι τῆς ἀμέσου ἐκλογῆς Ἀρχιεπισκόπου Πράγας καί εἶτα Προκαθημένου τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ὑμῶν, ἵνα τακτοποιηθῶσι τὰ τοῦ αὐτόσε ὑμετέρου οἴκου καί ἵνα μὴ ἐπαληθευθῆ καί δι' ὑμᾶς ἡ θεόπνευστος Πατερική ρῆσις: «Καί γάρ ἂν εἶημεν ὡς ἀληθῶς πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀτοπώτατοι, σχίσμασι καί κατατομαῖς Ἐκκλησιῶν ἐφηδόμενοι καί μὴ τήν συνάφειαν τῶν μελῶν τοῦ σώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ τό μέγιστον τῶν ἀγαθῶν τιθέμενοι» (Μεγάλου Βασιλείου, Ἐπιστολή 156, Εὐαγγεῖον πρεσβυτέρῳ, P.G.32,613C) καί, τέλος, ἵνα μὴ εὗρεθῆ ὁ πανίερος Οἰκουμενικός Θρόνος εἰς τήν ἀδήριτον πλήν ὀφειλετικήν ἀνάγκην ἀντιμετωπίσεως ἀλλέως τοῦ ἀνακύψαντος ζητήματος. Παρακαλοῦμεν δέ ὑμᾶς ἀδελφικῶς ὅπως μὴ δίδητε τόπον εἰς τὰς ἐνεργείας τοῦ μισοκάλου, «ἵνα μὴ τό κακόν χειρὸν γένηται».

Ἡ Μήτηρ Ἐκκλησία, Ἱερώτατε ἀδελφέ, κατὰ τὴν κανονικὴν τάξιν καὶ ἀκρίβειαν, ὑποχρεοῦται ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐπαναλαμβάνομεν, νὰ ὑπηρετῇ θυσιαστικῶς τὴν πανορθόδοξον ἀφ' ἑνός ἐνότητα, τὴν εὐστάθειαν δέ καὶ εὐημερίαν ἐκάστης τοπικῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας ἐξ ἑτέρου, τοιοῦτοτρόπως δέ νὰ τεχνουργῇ Ἀγιοπατερικῶς τὴν σωτηριώδη πορείαν τῆς Μιᾶς καὶ Ἐνιαίας Ἁγίας Ὀρθοδοξίας, ἀκεραιώνουσα ἐν φιλαδελφίᾳ ἡ Ἐκκλησία Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ὀφειλετικῶς τὸ μεμωλωπισμένον ἢ μωλωπιζόμενον κατὰ καιροῦς σῶμα καὶ ἀποκαθιστῶσα τὴν «ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης».

Οὐδαμῶς ἀμφιβάλλομεν ὅτι ἡ ἀνωτέρω μητρικὴ ἔκκλησις τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου καὶ ἡ Πατριαρχικὴ ἡμῶν προσωπικὴ προτροπὴ θέλουσιν εὖρει εὐήκοον οὖς ἐν τῷ παρόντι μάλιστα καιρῷ τῆς «μεγάλῃς χρεΐᾳ τῆς σπουδῆς καὶ πολλῆς τῆς ἐπιμελείας εὐεργετηθῆναι τι τὰς Ἐκκλησίας. Εὐεργεσία δέ ἐστὶν ἐνωθῆναι τὰ τέως διεσπασμένα» (Μεγάλου Βασιλείου 113, Τοῖς ἐν Ταρσῷ πρεσβυτέροις, P.G. 32,525C-D), διό καὶ ἀπεκδεχόμεθα τὴν ἀνάληψιν τῶν προσηκουσῶν ἀπὸ μέρους τῶν αὐτόθι Ἱεραρχῶν πρωτοβουλιῶν καὶ τὴν ἄμεσον ἐνημέρωσιν καὶ τῆς Μητρός Ἐκκλησίας.

Εὐχόμενοι ἐπὶ τούτοις τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ Ἱερότητι ὅπως ὁ ὀδηγήσας τοὺς μάγους οὐράνιος ἀστὴρ εἰς προσκύνησιν τοῦ Θεοῦ Βρέφους κατευθύνῃ τὰς διανοίας καὶ φωτίσῃ τὰς σκέψεις ὑμῶν πάντων τῶν ἐν Τσεχία καὶ Σλοβακία εἰς ἐπιτέλεσιν τοῦ δέοντος καὶ ἐπιβαλλομένου πρὸς ἐπικράτησιν τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ τῆς εὐδοκίας ἐν τοῖς κόλποις τῆς αὐτόθι Ὀρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας, ἐπικαλούμεθα ἐφ' ὑμᾶς τὴν Χάριν καὶ τὸ ἄπειρον Ἐλεος τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Ἰ.βιγ' Δεκεμβρίου λα'

Ἐπισημασθέντες ἀγαπῶντες ἡμεῖς ἀδελφοί.

Prot. No. 1127

Your Eminence Metropolitan Simeon of Olomouc and Brno, dearly beloved and precious brother in Christ our God and concelebrant of our Modesty: grace and peace from God be with you.

It is well known and substantiated, both from church history but even from the development of the militant Church in the world through the ages to this day, that our Most Holy Apostolic and Patriarchal Ecumenical Throne, in addition to its other privileges and responsibilities, also possesses the dutiful ministry and concern for the stability and godly welfare as well as the uninterrupted continuity of the salvific service toward humanity among all local Most Holy Orthodox Churches. Moreover, it always practices what is appropriate, with proper consequences with regard to the principles of the Orthodox canonical order and tradition, serving their interests as best understood whether for the prevention or the solution to every possible or probable deviation from the established boundaries, which were put into place by our fathers and synodally ratified by the Church in the Holy Spirit.

In accordance with this canonical and ecclesiological principle, the Holy Mother and Great Church of Christ, after duly assessing the request of the late Archbishop Dorotheus of Prague and All the Czech Lands and Slovakia, of blessed memory, making use of its exclusive canonical responsibility and right, deemed that the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia then fulfilled all of the prerequisite canonical criteria for its elevation to the status of an autocephalous and self-administered Church, thereby blessing its autocephaly in 1998 by means of our Patriarchal and Synodal Tome.

As known, together with the transmission of the light of Orthodox truth almost twelve centuries ago to the peoples of this region, as well as to the entire wider Moravia, the Mother Church of Constantinople also proceeded with all these actions and canonical acts, while creating the autocephalous Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia with many sacrifices and risks, in order that the latter may continue to grow on a firm rock and foundation in its salvific mission, with maturity, for the edification of the body of Christ, the Orthodox faithful.

As witnessed by the extensive correspondence between the two Churches, especially recently, the Mother Church has always closely followed the ecclesiastical situation pursuant to the submission of resignation by His Beatitude Archbishop Christopher, until a short time ago the head of the Church there, which has not unfolded fluently, as might have been expected, making every effort to support the Hierarchy, the clergy and the people to maintain unity.

Indeed, our Modesty originally sent as its Exarch His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, following formal invitation, according to the 9th paragraph of the Tome of Autocephaly, expressed in the letter dated October 10, 2013, from Your Eminence, in your capacity as Locum Tenens, wherein you requested “the realization of the number of Hierarchs-members of the Holy Synod of [y]our Church, so that its decisions may fulfill the charges of the Sacred Canons of our Holy Orthodox Church,” which decisions pertained to filling the vacant Holy Archdiocese of Prague, which ultimately was impossible because the proposed candidates for this position did not fulfill the prerequisite criteria foreseen by the sacred and holy canons, as reported by His Eminence the Metropolitan of France in his lengthy and detailed report submitted to us.

Dear brother, we confess that the Mother Church was disappointed about such a development in the situation in an unexpected and improper manner. Nevertheless, it continued its dutiful and caring concern, responding once again to the invitation extended in writing by Your Eminence in your letter dated October 22, 2013, sending – at our proposal and the Synod’s decision – our brothers, Their Eminences Metropolitans Emmanuel of France and Arsenios of Austria, as Observers and Advisors, who also attended the deliberations of the Holy Synod of the Most Holy Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, which met on December 9, 2013, where there suddenly appeared, without being invited, during the Synodal sessions, representatives also of the Most Holy Church of Russia – in fact, we wonder in what canonical capacity? (After all, why were the representatives of the other local Orthodox Churches not invited as well?) – as we were informed in the report of our abovementioned representatives.

Therefore, we too are obliged to communicate with Your beloved Eminence, in our capacity as First-Hierarch of Your Mother Church and as the one who bears responsibility in this matter, by means of this encyclical Patriarchal Letter, in order to declare our surprise and dismay for these occurrences both in the earlier instance but particularly during the last meeting of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, a situation that was exacerbated until the termination of Your Eminence from the position of Locum Tenens not through a canonical process, but rather through nontransparent and indiscernible means, as you denounced in writing to the plenitude of the Church there and more broadly regarding the events that did not occur in accordance with canonical order and precision. As a result, there are rumors about the threat – if it has not already actually taken place – of the creation of schism within the embrace

of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, which would prove disastrous for its sacred institution, for the Orthodox people of God entrusted to it, as well as for the witness of the One and United Orthodox Church to the world.

Surely Your Eminence will also agree that these actions, which cannot otherwise be described, comprise indications of an unhealthy functioning of the Synodal institution and the self-administered status of a local Orthodox Autocephalous Church. This fact raises diverse questions and queries for knowledgeable canon lawyers, theologians and Hierarchs, while leading to the conclusion that the autocephaly of your Church there is experiencing tribulation, inasmuch as the relevant canonical criteria are not being met, one of the most fundamental of which is the ability of an autocephalous Church to be self-administered by its Hierarchy, which should be mature and capable to canonically recognize its members as well as the president and first-hierarchy among them. It is this ability that is now questioned by the events that occurred. All this leads the Mother Church to the unfortunate position of seeking other ways of resolving irregular situation, which has been created and increasingly intensified, in accordance with the sacred and holy canons as well as historically substantiated tradition of the Church.

We repeat that this emerging and evolving situation greatly disturbs the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which has undergone so many sacrifices for the excellent progress and godly welfare of your local Church. Wherefore, we exhort and stipulate, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, that “the reputation of a Church lies in its synodal system” (*On Psalm 149*, PG55.493), reminding you also of his words that not even the blood of martyrdom can ever suffice to erase the sin of someone who brings schism to the Church.

Thus, we call upon all our brothers in Christ comprising the members of the Holy Synod of the Most Holy Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia to consider the responsibilities that they possess and bear before God and people in order that, each one adhering to what was confessed during his ordination to the Episcopate, you may each collaborate as much as you can – not to say, even more than you can – in partnership, cooperation and concord, in order to rectify the important circumstantial issues facing your precious local Church, namely the immediate election of the Archbishop of Prague and afterward the First-Hierarch of your Church, so that you may settle the affairs of your household and not realize the inspired patristic words: “Indeed, we are truly the worst of all people if we create schisms and divisions in the Church, rather than considering as our greatest service the unity of the members of the body of Christ.” (Basil the Great, *Letter 156: To Evagrius the Presbyter*, PG32.613C) Finally, in order that the most sacred Ecumenical Throne may not find itself in the inevitable, albeit obligatory position of resolving the emerging matter in another way, we fraternally entreat you not to give way to the actions of the evil one, “so that the wrong may not be compounded.”

Your Eminence, dear brother, in accordance with canonical order and precision, we repeat that the Mother Church is obliged by events to serve sacrificially on the one hand the Panorthodox unity and on the other hand the stability as well as welfare of each local Orthodox Church, thereby pursuing traditional ways of preserving the salvific development of the One and United Holy Orthodox Church, while as Church of Constantinople fraternally and dutifully integrating the body of Christ that has been divided or is being divided from time to time so as to restore the “unity of the spirit in the fellowship of peace.”

We have no doubt that the above maternal plea of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and our own personal Patriarchal exhortation will find an attentive ear, particularly in the present time when “there is a great need for attentiveness and much heedfulness to assist the Churches. And what is beneficial is to bring unity to what was formerly divided.” (Basil the Great, *Letter 113: To the Presbyters in Tarsus*, PG32.525CD) Thus, we expect that the Hierarchs there will assume responsibility for the proper initiatives as well as the immediate advisement of the Mother Church.

Finally, Your Eminence, we pray that the heavenly star, which led the wise men to the adoration of the divine infant, may also guide your minds and enlighten the thoughts of everyone in the Czech Lands and Slovakia to achieve what is necessary and mandatory for peace and goodwill to prevail in the embrace of the Orthodox Church there, and we invoke upon you the grace and boundless mercy of God.

December 31, 2013