

His Eminence Metropolitan HILARION of Eastern America and New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (Moscow
Patriarchate) *etc.*

Paris, 5th of November 2018

Your Eminence, Dear Monseigneur Hilarion,

I have learned that a cleric of my diocese, Archpriest George Blatinsky, rector of the Parish of the Nativity of Christ and of Saint Nicholas in Florence, has, on his own authority and with your explicit agreement, placed himself in your jurisdiction, without my having given him my blessing to do so nor provided him with a letter of canonical release. On Sunday, 28th October, in the liturgical celebrations, he ceased commemorating his canonical bishop and His All-holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch. What is more, Father George Blatinsky has led astray the second priest of the parish, Father Oleg Turcan, as well as the community of Florence, in the same way. To make matters worse, Father Blatinsky has allowed himself to utter shameful, untrue and slanderous remarks, by publicly declaring at the end of the Liturgy that he could no longer remain “in a schismatic jurisdiction” because His All-holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch would, supposedly, “have fallen into schism and would no longer have grace”.

I would like to draw Your Eminence’s attention to this irregular situation which undermines good ecclesial order and the good relations established between our two ecclesial bodies over the last ten years. The unilateral decision of Father George Blatinsky goes against the canonical rules concerning the transfer of a cleric from one jurisdiction to another; in the same way the transfer of the church in Florence under your jurisdiction has been made in conditions which are contrary to all the holy canons of the Orthodox Church, and also contrary to the statutes of the parish in Florence, deposited with the Italian civil authorities.

I also wish to inform you formally that, by a decision of 1st November, Archpriest George Blatinsky and Priest Oleg Turcan have been placed under a ban *a divinis* because of their actions. They will also be summoned to the Ecclesiastical Tribunal and, in the case of refusal or stubbornness over their leading astray, they will be removed from the lists of clergy and reduced to the lay state.

I have no doubt that Your Eminence understands, as I do, that the statements and actions of Father Blatinsky constitute, on his part, an inappropriate reaction to the tensions which have arisen between the Ecumenical Throne and the Church of Russia over the Church situation in the Ukraine. But you will also agree that one day or another, in accordance with the inscrutable will of the Lord, a resolution of the matter will take place between the leaders of the two Churches. And I pray that this day will come as soon as possible. In the meantime, it seems inappropriate to stir up here among us, in our countries where the Orthodox witness is in a minority, a conflict which is already very painful, by providing support for senseless acts like those of Father Blatinsky, at the risk of ruining the chances of achieving in the near future the healing of wounds from which the entire Church of Christ is currently suffering. Therefore, I invite you to contact me as soon as possible to put an end to the abnormal, anti-canonical and illegal situation which has arisen in the parish of Florence as a result of the actions of Father Blatinsky.

Please believe, Dear Monseigneur, in my fraternal sentiments in the Lord

+ John, Archbishop of Charioupolis
Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch