

Welcome words

Your Eminence, Your Grace,
Dear Conference' Guests!

Welcome to our conference, which is taking place in difficult times for both Ukrainian society and the state, and, especially, for our Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The conference is dedicated to the question of reconciliation. Three years ago the members of the group "Reconciliation in Europe" could not expect such a rapid events' development of recent weeks. Similarly, in March, when the working group was meeting in Kyiv, we planned to talk more about the problems in the East of Ukraine and other related issues.

However, since April we have seen that more important is not the question of how the Churches can help society, but how to solve problems between the Churches, how to deal with prejudices, how to reconcile the relationships between the church and the state.

In the situation of tension inside Ukraine, we have decided to divide the conference into two parts. In part one, we will hear more about the experience of our foreign participants. After all, similar problems in the relationships between the Churches have been both in Germany and Poland. The question of society's expectations from the side of the Ukrainian Churches will be also raised tonight.

The next day, we plan to focus more on the reports of Ukrainian experts. In particular, it will be about the situation in the East of Ukraine and the problem of autocephaly for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

Let me remind you the words from the statement of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church from October 15, 2018: "We received the message with the deepest pain ...". And in the end: "We call for a mutual search for ways out of the worst crisis that is tearing the body of the Church". Similar expressions are present in the leadership of many other Christian communities. It is just as a search for such a solution to the crisis that I understand our conference.

I hope that different actors of the tense situation in the current church environment of Ukraine will come to the awareness of mutual involvement in the conflict and, after a while, will be able to sincerely say: "We forgive and ask for forgiveness!", as it was both in German-Polish and Polish-Ukrainian dialogues.

Thank you for attention! Now we are inviting the representatives of the Churches to take the floor at the conference.