

**Greetings from His Beatitude Onufriy, Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine,
Primate of Ukrainian Orthodox Church**

To the organizers, guests and participants of the conference

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am glad to congratulate you on the occasion of the opening of the International Conference “Strategies of Reconciliation. The Role of the Churches in Ukraine”. The conference is organized by the international group “Reconciliation”, which brings together the representatives of Christian denominations of four countries: Germany, Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has always supported the activities of the “Reconciliation” group, delegating to its membership own official representatives and assisting in holding the meetings and conferences of the group.

It is difficult to overestimate the relevance of the topic of today’s conference. Ukraine is going through a very difficult time, one can say for sure – a fateful stage of its history. The armed confrontation in the East of our country continues for several years, and intense discussions over further ways of our country’s development are not suppressed in the society. However, it is obvious to all of us that Ukraine’s path to the future can only be through deep social reconciliation.

Reconciliation is an important concept in which several meaningful layers can be distinguished. For us, Christians, reconciliation is, first and foremost, a key position of Christian teaching. The central point of our faith is reconciliation of a man with God. The meaning of our lives is the path to God through the reconciliation in Christ. We overcome our own sin and our imperfection in unity with Christ. Through Christ we are reconciled to God. Therefore, reconciliation is our path to a perfect life in Christ.

However, reconciliation with God is impossible without reconciliation with our neighbour. The love to God is manifested in our ability to find peace with those around us. The Apostle John the Theologian writes outright that one who hates his brother cannot love God (1 John 4:20). This means that Christians in this world have a mission of reconciliation. Love for one’s neighbour is the cornerstone of Christian ethics.

Together with this, reconciliation has a purely terrestrial, socio-political dimension. No human community can develop if it is in conflict and confrontation. Therefore, the path to earthly well-being always goes through reconciliation.

Today's conference is unique because its organizers and participants try to look at reconciliation from different perspectives. The "Reconciliation" group unites Christians. Therefore, reconciliation for them is not just a compromise between people. Reconciliation is a gift from God. Therefore, social reconciliation cannot be seen in isolation from the spiritual state of society, from our relationships with God.

In each liturgy Ukrainian Orthodox Church prays for peace in Ukraine. We ask God to give us this precious gift of reconciliation. Sometimes it seems to us that compromise is impossible, that the differences of opinion with our opponents are so fundamental that it cannot be overcome. However, we must always remember that God is with us. It is the Lord who can give us the gift of reconciliation, and we should always be open to God, to His omnipotent will.

Obviously, relying on the will of God does not mean giving up human activity. We must look for ways to peace. That is why, our Church appreciates the activity of the "Reconciliation" group. I hope that at today's conference we will hear solid reports that will help us understand more deeply possible strategies for reconciliation, ways to valid peace.

Taking the opportunity, I would like to reiterate that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is striving for peace in Ukrainian land. We have always advocated and stand for the territorial integrity and state sovereignty of Ukraine. We are open to cooperation with state authorities, political forces, Ukrainian and international public organizations to achieve lasting peace in our country.

It is not for the first time that Ukraine becomes the place for holding the conferences of "Reconciliation" group. This year special efforts were made by the representatives of Ukrainian Orthodox Church to prepare this conference. I want to acknowledge the fruitful work of the "Academic Initiative" Foundation, which cares about improving the level of theological education in our Church and develops cooperation with foreign academic, educational and scientific institutions.

Welcome for all foreign guests and participants of the conference in Kyiv. I hope your stay in Ukraine will be interesting and complex. I wish everyone fruitful discussions and enriching communication. I call for God's blessing to your activity.