

Sylvester – Luke Dialogue

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March 27 – Archbishop Sylvester

BEFORE THE 9TH DAY OF THE DEATH OF PATRIARCH FILARET (DENYSENKO)

Tomorrow will be nine days since the death of Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko). Of course, many of my readers will immediately ask why I call Filaret (Denysenko) a patriarch? After all, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church has never recognized him as a patriarch. Indeed, none of the Local Orthodox Churches of the world has recognized Filaret (Denysenko) as a patriarch. Official representatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate even explained that, having lifted all previously imposed canonical punishments from him, the Church of Constantinople still considers Filaret (Denysenko) not a patriarch, but the former Metropolitan of Kyiv, who is at peace.

Let me remind you that in a dialogue between representatives of different Christian denominations and different church jurisdictions, there is a rule: to use names and titles as they are accepted by each of the parties to the dialogue. This is a natural rule of politeness. That is why I call the late Filaret (Denysenko) patriarch here.

By the way, when in 2009 the prospect of starting an official dialogue between the UOC and the UOC-KP was being considered, one of the points of the preliminary agreements was precisely the use in the dialogue documents of those titles that are accepted within each of the parties. Although this did not at all mean recognition of these names and titles.

I hope for the understanding of the parishioners of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and their Christian love.

I consider it fundamentally important to emphasize that we are talking about a person's activities — about what remains after him and after death, about his legacy.

Back in 1991, Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) clearly stated that he had embarked on the path of struggle for the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and he consistently followed this path all subsequent years. Then, in the early 1990s, for the majority of bishops, priests, monks and parishioners of the UOC, such a choice seemed incomprehensible and even erroneous. That is why Metropolitan Filaret encountered massive resistance in the church environment. However, it should be recognized that during his life Filaret (Denysenko) repeatedly became one of the first to feel irreversible

changes in the state and society. At such moments, he clearly and unambiguously made a choice in favor of the new, which to many still seemed like a utopia.

It is quite obvious that immediately after the declaration of independence of Ukraine in 1991, Metropolitan Filaret realized that this was not something accidental. He felt that a “tectonic shift” had taken place, as they say, and that the world would never be the same again. Therefore, Metropolitan Filaret already saw his further activities in a new way.

As numerous eyewitnesses of those events (both those who followed Filaret and those who opposed him) say, he was a strong, strong-willed person. But this strength of his had a flip side: he almost never made concessions to his opponents but tried to force them to take his side. Apparently, this intransigence became the key reason for the deep conflict in the episcopate of the UOC in 1992, which led to a long-term painful separation.

Therefore, it is not surprising that even today the personality of Filaret (Denysenko) evokes diametrically opposed assessments. Of course, not all of his steps and decisions can be considered successful. And therefore, disputes around his personality will continue in the future.

When in the 1990s, Metropolitan Filaret was subjected to numerous church punishments, he himself repeatedly stated that he considered them invalid. But his actions indicate that he was still constantly looking for ways to cancel these church punishments, no matter how unfair they seemed to him. Now we already know that from 1992 to 2018, he repeatedly filed appeals to the Patriarch of Constantinople. As a result, this led to the decisions that were made at the Phanar in the fall of 2018.

However, here I would like to draw attention to another episode that is almost not mentioned today. On November 16, 2017, Patriarch Filaret sent a letter to the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, in which he wrote verbatim: "I, as your brother, co-minister, ask for forgiveness for everything that I have sinned in word, deed and with all my feelings, and I also sincerely forgive everyone from the heart" (I quote in the original language). It is interesting that he signed this letter without mentioning his rank: "Your brother Filaret". So, he himself was still looking for reconciliation and was able to compromise for the sake of this. Future historians have yet to carefully examine the strange situation that developed on November 30, 2017, at the Bishops' Council in Moscow. It is quite obvious that Filaret himself expected that the Council would decide to lift the canonical punishments from him and determine the further path to reconciliation. However, this did not happen. Moreover, publications appeared in the Russian media at that time that significantly complicated the process of possible reconciliation.

Why do I mention this? First of all, because (I emphasize once again) the aforementioned letter shows that Patriarch Filaret was still looking for ways to reconciliation. And that is why, when he did not find understanding from Patriarch Kirill and the Bishops' Council of the ROC, he made a decisive bet on negotiations with Constantinople, which ultimately turned out to be successful.

But there was another important aspect to this story for us. Since 1992, we have constantly heard from the leaders of the ROC (and in particular, from Metropolitan, and later Patriarch Kirill) that overcoming the schism in Ukraine is a priority task for them. But for some reason, as soon as even a hint of reconciliation appeared somewhere on the horizon, the leadership of the ROC did everything to prevent this reconciliation from happening. I remember at least two such cases. The first concerns the aforementioned attempt to start a dialogue in 2009. Then, due to the harsh intervention of the Moscow Patriarchate, the dialogue between the UOC and the UOC-KP was disrupted. And the second case is the strange story of Filaret's letter in 2017. It is quite obvious that this letter was the result of previous unofficial agreements with the leadership of the ROC. However, the letter did not achieve its goal.

Both of these incidents occurred at a time when Patriarch Kirill was at the helm of the Russian Orthodox Church. His supporters like to say that Patriarch Kirill is a talented diplomat and that he has vast experience in the field of church diplomacy. However, on the “Ukrainian side” his diplomacy has completely collapsed. All real opportunities to overcome the split have been lost. Dialogue with the Patriarch of Constantinople on the Ukrainian issue has completely failed. And after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, Patriarch Kirill's words and actions have led to the fact that even the small circle of his supporters who still remained within the UOC began rapidly to narrow.

I think that the story with Patriarch Filaret's letter, which occurred in 2017, clearly shows that the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church is simply not interested in overcoming the church conflict in Ukraine. It is quite obvious that the creation of a single Local Church in Ukraine, which would receive full recognition from all of World Orthodoxy, has always been regarded as a threat in the ROC. And therefore, the decisions made by the leadership of the ROC in the 1990s, 2009, and 2017 were always aimed not at overcoming the schism, but at preventing the real independence of the Church in Ukraine.

Of course, all this does not justify the actions of the deceased. I hope that someday we will see his biography, written dispassionately and in compliance with the standards of modern science. I think it would be an extremely interesting and instructive book.

Today is the 9th day after the departure into eternity of Filaret (Denysenko). During these days, a lot has already been said and written about him. I hope that the emotions of both his supporters and his opponents have calmed down a little. And we must, first of all, remember Christ's commandment about the need to offer prayers for everyone — even for those whom we consider our enemies and offenders. Therefore, today we must wish the newly reposed Filaret to rest in peace. Now his earthly path is no longer evaluated in human judgment, but in the Judgment of God. Therefore, let us ask our Lord Jesus Christ to show His mercy to the newly reposed. And let us hope that when we ourselves appear before God, the Lord will show His mercy to us as well. Let us remember the words of the Apostle James: “Judgement without mercy is for him who has not shown mercy; but mercy surpasses judgment” (James 2:13).

March 29 – Metropolitan Luke

Christ is in our midst, my dear readers!

The Mask of Mercy as an Instrument of Canonical Nihilism

During my interactions on Facebook, a question arose that prompted me to speak out regarding a recently published text by Archbishop Sylvester (Stoychev). Having read it, I believe that beneath the outward guise of "Christian all-forgiveness" lies a dangerous revision of Church history and canons, while—under the mask of Christian humility—an actual deconstruction of the synodal decisions of the UOC is being carried out.

Archbishop Sylvester's text—timed to coincide with the ninth day following the passing of Filaret (Denisenko)—represents, in my opinion, an instance of "theological amnesia," wherein political expediency is prioritized over dogmatic fidelity to the Church. The author attempts to legitimize the schism by shifting the issue from the plane of canon law into the realm of "diplomatic etiquette," and by recasting fidelity to the canons as mere "prophetic foresight."

The high praise accorded to Denisenko's "force of will" and his ability to "sense tectonic shifts" sounds like an apologia for the sin of pride—a justification of a personality cult at the expense of the synodal mind. In the Orthodox tradition, political foresight has never served as a justification for rending the Seamless Robe of Christ. By characterizing persistence in schism merely as "unyieldingness," the author effectively justifies Denisenko's actions.

Moreover, the assertion that Denisenko was "one of the first to sense the changes" indirectly accuses the hierarchs and confessors of the UOC of that era of spiritual blindness. If Filaret's path is deemed "prophetic," then the Council of Kharkiv in 1992—

which deposed him—is effectively declared a mistake, and its participants are cast as opponents of "historical progress." This leads to an absurd conclusion: the Church must repent before the schism for having upheld its canonical order.

Archbishop Sylvester draws attention to Filaret's 2017 letter as evidence of a search for peace. However, he ignores a key historical fact: as early as December 1, 2017, during a press conference, Denisenko explicitly stated that he had "not repented, is not repenting, and will not repent" (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p13yfMIRwr8>). From a theological standpoint, forgiveness without repentance (*metanoia*) constitutes a profanation of the Sacrament. Denisenko sought not reconciliation with God and His Church, but rather an "amnesty"—without any admission of guilt—in order to legitimize his unlawful ordinations and continue his treacherous absorption of the UOC. By ignoring this fact, the author falls into a dangerous delusion, believing that political compromise and diplomacy can serve as substitutes for the spiritual healing of a schism through repentance.

The Archbishop's logic inevitably leads to an affirmation of the correctness of Patriarch Bartholomew's position. If Filaret's actions were justified by their "historical context," and the ecclesiastical sanctions imposed against him were merely the product of "Moscow's failed diplomacy," then the actions taken by the Phanar in 2018 emerge as the logical culmination of this entire process.

By adopting such a stance, the author of this text signs the death warrant of his own jurisdiction, leading to ecclesiological self-dissolution. According to a letter from Patriarch Bartholomew addressed to our Primate, Metropolitan Onufriy (see <https://nv.ua/ukraine/politics/varfolomey-skazal-cho-svyashchenniki-upc-mp-ne-yavlyayutsya-pravyashchimi-episkopami-50121286.html>), the hierarchs of the UOC are no longer ruling bishops, but merely titular figures "residing in Ukraine."

A question thus arises for Vladika: If Filaret's path was the correct one, and the Council in Kharkiv merely an unfortunate misunderstanding, then who exactly is Vladika Sylvester today? By his own logic, he is either a participant in a structure that has historically been "in error" for thirty years, or a titular bishop devoid of any real canonical authority, awaiting absorption by Denisenko's "prophetic" structure.

The attempt to "wish peace" upon a man who, until his very last breath, publicly refused to repent of the sin of schism appears not as a virtue, but as a capitulation to the spirit of the age. One cannot build unity upon lies about the past. True mercy "triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13) only when that judgment has been acknowledged, and the sin recognized and confessed. Otherwise, we are dealing not with theology, but with an

attempt to shoehorn the Church into the current political climate—thereby betraying the memory of those who, for decades, remained faithful to the canons amidst persecution.

March 31 – Archbishop Sylvester

ON “DECONSTRUCTION OF COUNCIL DECISIONS”

Last week I published my thoughts on the death of Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko). In my text, I expressed the hope that my readers would show understanding and Christian love. In response to my thoughts, a comment by Metropolitan Luke of Zaporizhzhia appeared.

Metropolitan Luke’s publication is full of accusations against me. I am used to hearing this kind of thing, but it usually comes from anonymous telegram channels. And here I received an open rebuke from one of the bishops of our Church. Therefore, I consider it necessary to respond to the accusations made.

Metropolitan Luke accuses me of trying to “legitimize the schism” (hereinafter, the quotes are in the original language). To confirm this serious accusation, Metropolitan Luke resorts to strange manipulations. First, he claims that I attribute “prophetic foresight” to Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko), and then he makes an unexpected conclusion: “If Filaret’s path is recognized as “prophetic,” then the 1992 Council in Kharkov that deposed him is declared a mistake, and its participants are opponents of “historical progress.” This leads to an absurd conclusion: the Church must repent before the schism for having preserved the canonical order.”

The conclusion is indeed absurd, but it is not generated by my thoughts at all, but by the fantasies of Metropolitan Luke himself.

Anyone who wants to can reread my text and make sure that I am not saying anything in it about the gift of “prophecy” or about the fallacy of the decisions of the Kharkov Council. I said that in 1990–1991, Metropolitan Filaret felt the irreversibility of political changes in the former Soviet Union. What is the point of “prophecy” here? It seems that Metropolitan Luke does not understand how the prophetic gift differs from natural intuition. He calmly replaced one concept with another and on this basis accused me of condemning the Kharkiv Council. In general, I am amazed at Metropolitan Luke’s ability to first see in the text something that is not there, and then boldly accuse me on this basis.

So, according to Vladika Luke, I attributed to Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) the gift of prophecy and on this basis condemned both the participants and the decisions of the Kharkiv Council of 1992. And this, in turn, supposedly leads to the fact that “the Church must repent before the schism for having preserved the canonical order.”

In my text, one can hardly find the statement that “the Church must repent before the schism.” Here again we encounter the method of conducting a polemic, which Metropolitan Luke masterfully uses: first he sees in the text what is not there, and then skillfully breaks down his opponent for what he did not say.

Completely immersed in the reality he created himself, Metropolitan Luke addresses me with the question: “If Filaret’s path was the correct one, and the Council in Kharkiv merely an unfortunate misunderstanding, then who exactly is Vladika Sylvester today?”

But in my text there is no word that Filaret’s path was correct (on the contrary, I wrote that “not all his [Filaret’s] steps and decisions can be considered successful”), nor any statement that the Kharkov Council was an “unfortunate misunderstanding.”

I also hope that Metropolitan Luke remembers that the Kharkiv Council of 1992 clearly stated both support for the independence of Ukraine and support for the idea of the independence of the Ukrainian Church: “We not only unanimously approve and support the aspirations of the Ukrainian Orthodox flock for complete independence, that is, canonical autocephaly, but also take all measures to resolve this vital issue of our Church by legal means” (“Address of the Kharkiv Council”). I am convinced that our Church still stands on this position today. Therefore, I consider the accusation of me in “deconstruction of the council decisions of the UOC” to be groundless. At the same time, I cannot help but remind Metropolitan Luke that the last Council of our Church, with the participation of bishops, clergy, monastics, and laity, was held on May 27, 2022, in the Kyiv “Feofania” monastery.

The decisions of this Council are binding for all members of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. But today we constantly hear open insults both to this Council, to its participants, to the decisions they made, and even to the restoration of chrism-making.

At the same time, I do not recall Metropolitan Luke expressing criticism of those who are engaged in the “deconstruction” of the decisions of the Council of Feofania. Apparently, Vladika Luke sees a problem only in my non-existent speeches against the Kharkiv Council, but he does not see any problem in the very real attacks against the Council of Feofania and in the desire of some individuals to nullify its decisions. It is strange, where does such selectivity come from? And, by the way, does this not show signs of “theological amnesia” and “revision of church history and canons” on the part of Metropolitan Luke himself?

Finally: I have repeatedly said and am ready to confirm once again that I consider discussions within the Church to be a normal and completely healthy phenomenon, which is a prerequisite for ensuring that the conciliar mind of the Church is not replaced by the cult of personality, as Vladika Luke warns.

April 1 – Metropolitan Luke

Christ is in our midst, my dear readers!

On "Polite" Obituaries and Seized Churches

Archbishop Sylvester has honored me with his attention by engaging in a direct polemic, in which he accused me of "manipulation" and "fantasizing." In essence, he attempts to defend himself by asserting that his remarks regarding Filaret's intuition were merely an acknowledgment of political acumen, rather than an endorsement of the spiritual rectitude of the schism. In an attempt to mount a skillful defense, the author resorts to semantic acrobatics, striving to distinguish between "natural intuition" and a "prophetic gift." However, within an ecclesiastical context, such a substitution of concepts does not withstand scrutiny. When a bishop of the Church, in an obituary for a man who spent decades in schism, attributes to him the ability to be "the first to sense irreversible changes" and to make a "choice in favor of the new," this inevitably compels me to interpret it as a moral legitimation of sin. If "intuition" led a man to instigate a schism that torments the Church, then praising that intuition in an obituary appears to be an acknowledgment of the historical rectitude of the schismatic leader. Theologically, it is impossible to separate "political foresight" from its fruits—in this case, the destruction of Church unity.

Particular attention is drawn to the technical precision with which Vladika Sylvester glosses over a key historical falsification he himself committed regarding Filaret's letter to the 2017 Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. He asserts that Denisenko was engaged in a "sincere search for peace," while completely ignoring Denisenko's own public statements made on December 1st of that very same year. Let us recall that, at that time, Filaret explicitly dashed any hopes for spiritual reconciliation by declaring: "I have not repented, I am not repenting, and I will not repent." Ignoring this fact, Archbishop Sylvester deliberately substitutes the concept of repentance with categories of political compromise—a move that constitutes a direct deconstruction of Orthodox ecclesiology.

The Rector asserts that he did not condemn the Kharkiv Council. Yet, in doing so, he executes a very subtle maneuver: he reminds us that the Council of 1992 also advocated for autocephaly. By this means, he attempts to equate the position of the canonical Church with the position of Denisenko—a move that smacks of false equivalence. The Kharkiv Council charted a canonical, conciliar path, whereas Denisenko chose a path of self-will and hubris. By equating Filaret's "consistency" with the Church's legitimate quest, the Archbishop effectively disavows the decisions of 1992, transforming them from an act

of defending the canons into an annoying historical obstacle on the way to a "prophetically foreseen" future.

Vladika employs the classic **tu quoque** ("you, too") fallacy, pointing out that his critic allegedly fails to defend the decisions of Feofania with the same zeal as those of the Kharkiv Council. This constitutes an evasion of the core issue. The discussion regarding the status of Denisenko and his "legacy" is fundamentally a question of the dogmatic and canonical stance toward schism. Citing Feofania in this context is an attempt to shift a theological dispute into the realm of intra-church administrative loyalty and political alignments of the present moment—all while issuing a warning against a certain "cult of personality." [Ссылка на Феофанию здесь — это попытка перевести богословский спор в плоскость внутрицерковной административной лояльности и политических раскладов текущего момента, при этом предостерегает от некоего «культа личности».] Defending the Church's canons and remaining faithful to the determinations of the Kharkiv Council is not a "cult of personality," but rather an adherence to the conciliar mind—the very foundation of ecclesiastical existence. The irony lies in the fact that it was Vladika Sylvester himself who, in his initial text, devoted immense attention to the "strong personality" of Denisenko—effectively constructing his narrative around Denisenko's persona rather than around ecclesiastical truth. He latches onto turns of phrase such as "I didn't use the word 'prophet'," yet ignores the overall spirit of his text—which, in the view of other commentators as well, was clearly aimed at softening Filaret's image and blurring the boundaries between the Church and the schism.

Ultimately, the defendant's text leaves a number of questions unanswered: if Filaret was merely a "strong-willed man with intuition," why would a bishop of the UOC publicly refer to him as "Patriarch"—even if only out of courtesy—and call for prayers for him as a "newly departed" soul, while ignoring the fact that he never repented? If the path of schism is deemed "intuitively correct," and its leader a "Patriarch," then upon what foundation rests the current status of Archbishop Sylvester himself, as well as that of the entire canonical UOC? Such a stance appears less as the voice of a shepherd and more as a capitulation to a political **fait accompli**.

In concluding this analysis, it is important to emphasize: Archbishop Sylvester's Christian call to pray for the deceased is, in itself, unobjectionable, for the Church prays for God's mercy upon all who have reposed. However, within the context of the immense tragedy that the schism has inflicted upon Ukrainian Orthodoxy, the prioritization of spiritual values within his text appears deeply distorted. In my humble opinion, it would have been far more appropriate—and pastorally justified—to issue a primary call to prayer for those who have suffered, for years and decades, from the fruits of the deceased's actions.

We have no right to forget the thousands of faithful children of our Church who have been—and continue to be—subjected to persecution; whose churches have been seized by force; and who themselves—the elderly, women, and priests—have been beaten and maimed. All of this was perpetrated by the "faithful followers" of the deceased, often at his direct behest and with his ideological blessing. Our pastoral duty compels us, first and foremost, to turn our gaze toward Christ's "little flock"—those who have remained faithful to canonical truth in the face of physical violence.

Let us recall the High Priestly Prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. Addressing the Father, He uttered words that define the boundaries of pastoral care: "I pray for them. I do not pray for the whole world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours" (John 17:9). If the Savior Himself singles out His disciples—His Church—as a distinct object of intercessory prayer, then it is our duty, above all, to protect and pray for our long-suffering flock. Christian love must not devolve into indifference toward the pain of victims for the sake of a dubious "etiquette" shown toward their persecutors. Prayer for a persecutor is possible, yet it must not ring louder than the lamentation for his victims, nor can it serve as a substitute for standing firm in the truth—the very truth for which our parishioners are shedding their blood.

April 1, 9:08 p.m. – Archbishop Sylvester

ONCE AGAIN ABOUT THE REAL AND THE IMAGINED

On Wednesday, April 1, Metropolitan Luke responded to my latest publication (<https://t.me/lekarzpluka/586>). I consider it necessary to respond to Vladika's new text.

First of all, I would like to note: despite the differences in our views, we are all members of the One Church of Christ, and therefore the polemic between us should not go beyond the boundaries of a fraternal discussion. Our texts with the bishop are an example of a useful public polemic.

At the same time, I was surprised that for some reason Vladika Luke calls me "the defendant" (in the original — "the defendant"), and my post — "the defendant's text". Let me remind you that the word "defendant" is a legal term. In civil proceedings, the "defendant" is the party to the proceedings against whom a lawsuit has been filed. That is, this is the one against whom charges have been brought and a trial has been initiated.

I hope that Metropolitan Luke simply used an unfortunate expression, since I am not a "defendant" and he is not a judge. We are not in court, but are having a discussion.

To put it bluntly, I did not see any fundamentally new ideas in Metropolitan Luka's new publication. In general, the same theses are repeated here as in his first text directed against me. In particular, Vladika accuses me of "semantic balancing" because I distinguished between the prophetic gift and natural intuition.

I must repeat once again: in my first post, I did not speak at all about the prophetic gift. Metropolitan Luke himself used this phrase, attributing it to me. In addition, I did not engage in "substitution of concepts." On the contrary, I pointed out the obvious terminological confusion in his reasoning and suggested a clear distinction between the prophetic gift and natural intuition.

Misunderstandings arise precisely when these concepts are mixed. And the new text of Metropolitan Luke only demonstrates the danger of such mixing. The thesis that "in the church context such a substitution of concepts does not stand up to criticism" sounds strange. It is in the church context that a clear distinction between the prophetic gift and natural intuition is extremely important, while the rejection of this distinction "does not stand up to criticism". The prophetic gift (in the theological sense) is a special spiritual gift that a person receives from God. It makes it possible to understand the will of God and reveal it to others. In turn, intuition is a person's natural ability to foretell, based on experience, imagination and feelings. Intuitively, a person can perceive social changes, and this is in no way connected with spiritual gifts. At the same time, intuition does not exclude erroneous decisions.

In my opinion, it would be strange to deny the presence of natural intuition in Filaret (Denysenko). At the same time, guided by it, he could also make erroneous decisions. That is what I wrote about. There was no "gift of prophecy" in my text. Therefore, I do not see any subject for discussion here.

As for the situation surrounding Filaret's letter to the Bishops' Council in Moscow in November 2017, I clearly noted that "future historians have yet to carefully examine that strange situation." I did not draw any final conclusions, since we lack information about the non-public negotiations between the UOC-KP and the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate. Therefore, I only stated the obvious fact: in 2017, the Moscow Patriarchate lost a real opportunity to overcome the church schism in Ukraine. No more, but no less.

Unfortunately, Metropolitan Luke is again accusing me of fighting against the decisions of the Kharkiv Council. As in his previous publication, I am being attributed with opinions that I did not express, after which far-reaching conclusions are drawn.

I must emphasize once again: in my post I did not mention the Kharkiv Cathedral at all. At the same time, Metropolitan Luke boldly attributed to me the "deconstruction of the

council decisions”. Now he claims that I am allegedly trying to “equalize the position of the canonical Church and the position of Denisenko” and that this looks like a “false equivalence”. According to Vladika Luke, I turned the Kharkiv Council “into an annoying historical obstacle on the way to a ‘prophetically foreseen’ future”.

However, all these statements do not exist in my texts, but exclusively in the imagination of Metropolitan Luke. Therefore, I see no point in responding to these fabricated accusations. I will only note that a year ago — in March 2025 — the Kyiv Theological Academy published a “Short Explanatory Dictionary of Canon Law,” which includes, among other things, an article about the Kharkiv Council, which briefly outlines its decisions. And just a few days ago, the second edition of the book “Ukrainian Orthodox Church: Milestones of History” was published, prepared by the teachers of our Academy. It describes in detail the prehistory of the Kharkiv Council, its work, and the decisions made. This book also outlines the history of the church schism in Ukraine in the early 1990s. There are also assessments of the activities of Metropolitan Filaret. Both editions were published under my general editorship. The texts of these books fully reflect my position. So, if Metropolitan Luke wants to know about my real, not imaginary position, he can turn to these books.

I was somewhat surprised by Metropolitan Luke's statements regarding the difference between the Kharkiv Council of 1992 and the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Feofania in 2022. If Bishop Luke considers the decision of the Kharkiv Council in the context of a "dogmatic and canonical attitude to the schism", then he proposes to perceive the Council in Feofania exclusively in the context of "INTRA-CHURCH ADMINISTRATIVE LOYALTY AND POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS OF THE CURRENT MOMENT".

I would like to remind you that the Council in Feofania in its Resolution paid special attention to the topic of church schism in Ukraine and formulated a clear position on the prerequisites for a possible dialogue between the UOC and the OCU (paragraph 9 of the Resolution of the Council). Thus, the Council of Feofania was not merely a response to the “political alignments of the moment.” Moreover, the Council of Feofania directly continued the work of the Kharkiv Council in achieving the full canonical independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Let me remind you that the Council in Feofania worked literally on the day of the 30th anniversary of the Kharkiv Council. And His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufry, opening the gathering of bishops, priests, monks and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Feofania on May 27, 2022, clearly emphasized that this gathering continues the tradition of the Kharkiv Council. His Beatitude then said that the decisions of the Kharkiv Council “determined the further historical path of our Church. The past 30 years of church life have shown the correctness and appropriateness of these resolutions. In those difficult 90s for

Ukraine, the Council was able not only to preserve the unity of our Church, but also to protect it from the forces that tried to use the institution of the Church for their own purposes.” That is why I mentioned the Council in Feofania in my post. It was a direct continuation and even a development of the decisions that were made in Kharkiv in 1992. The Kharkiv Council condemned Metropolitan Filaret. At the same time, the Council fully supported the very idea of the complete canonical independence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. So, there was no question of any attempt to “equalize the position of the canonical Church and the position of Denisenko.” On the contrary, it was a question of the fact that, supporting church independence as a strategic goal, the Council rejected the path that Metropolitan Filaret had taken at that time. The Council in Feofania, stating the fact of the church schism in Ukraine, formulated the principles of a possible dialogue with the aim of overcoming this division.

Therefore, there is no *tu quoque* in my post. I am really surprised that, zealously defending the Kharkiv Council, Metropolitan Luke does not simply refuse the same consistent defense of another Council of the UOC, but even speaks of this second Council as the result of “political alignments of the current moment.”

The last part of Metropolitan Luke's post is devoted to the difficult situation in which our Church is today. The bishop writes: "We have no right to forget about thousands of faithful children of our Church, who were subjected and continue to be subjected to persecution, whose churches were seized by force, and they themselves - old men, women, priests - were beaten and maimed."

I do not know why Vladika Luke decided that I had forgotten about the trials that the clergy and believers of our Church are going through today. I will only remind Vladika that in 2023 the Kyiv Theological Academy and Seminary was deprived of the premises in which it had been located since its restoration in 1989. Only thanks to the hard work of teachers and students who showed courage and loyalty to their Church, we were able to preserve the educational process even in these difficult conditions. So, we do not just “remember” the difficult situation in which our Church is. We literally live inside these trials. In addition, I want to remind Metropolitan Luke that on April 11, 2023, I sent an official open letter to Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, in which I stated quite clearly what is happening to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church today. This letter spoke about the forcible seizure of churches, the beating of parishioners, and numerous violations of the law. Therefore, again, I would ask Metropolitan Luke not to fantasize and not to attribute invented views to me, but to rely on the analysis of my position on my public and accessible texts in the information field.

In conclusion, I once again express the hope that critics of my posts will show good faith, prudence and objectivity and will not attribute to me what I did not say and did not write. I believe that I have stated my position clearly enough.

Therefore, I consider it fruitless to continue repeating the same arguments, moving in a circle, and, following the advice of St. Apostle Paul (2 Tim. 2:23), I do not see the expediency of continuing this polemic with Metropolitan Luke.