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Address: Univerzitetski trg 2, 18000 Niš, YU
Tel: +381 18 547-095, Fax: +381 18-547-950

THE ORGANIZATION AND ACTIVITIES OF THE MACEDONIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Slave Nikolovski-Katin

Skopje

Abstract. *The Macedonian Orthodox Church as an autocephalous one is a part of the Holy Ecumenical Apostolic Church. It preserves the dogmas, canons and unity of the liturgy with the Eastern Orthodox Church and has an unique organization of the independent management of the church activities.*

It also protects the Bible, the rules of all ecumenical and indigenous Councils, as other autocephalous orthodox churches do, and discards all other schismatic teachings. It is steered in accordance with the Bible the Holy Traditions, the Apostolic Rules and the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The head of the autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church is the Archbishop that hold the title "Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia".

The organization and the activity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is also in the frames of the Constitution and the laws of the Republic of Macedonia in order to serve the Orthodox believers of the state.

Key words: *Macedonian Orthodox Church, Republic of Macedonia, macedonian diaspora*

The history of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is closely connected to the history of the Macedonian people. They have existed together for centuries, and simultaneously suffer and fight against the assimilation, denationalization and the injustice towards the Macedonian people on the Balkans and on the other places all over the world. The Church has played a first-rate role for the Macedonian people during the difficult periods of slavery, therefore it is said that the Church has been the base of the national recognition and cradle of the renaissance of the Macedonians in a longer period.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church plays an important role in encircling of the

Macedonians, both in the state and in the world. It is especially expressed by the constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, after the restoration of the Archbishopric of Ohrid in 1958 and after the proclamation of its autocephality in July 1967. The Macedonian Orthodox Church made a strong penetration between the orthodox Macedonians in the state and among the numerous Macedonian emigration in the overseas countries - the USA, Canada and Australia, as well as among the Macedonians who are temporary or permanently employed in the West-European countries.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church as an autocephalous one is a part of the Holy Ecumenical Apostolic Church. It preserves the dogmas, canons and unity of the liturgy with the Eastern Orthodox Church and has an unique organization of the independent management of the church activities.

It also protects the Bible, the rules of all ecumenical and indigenous Councils, as other autocephalous orthodox churches do, and discards all other schismatic teachings. It is steered in accordance with the Bible, the Holy Traditions, the Apostolic Rules and the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church is organized as an Archbishopric. In its canonical and administrative organization, it includes the following ten eparchies:

1. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Skopje, with its headquarters in Skopje;
2. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Prespa and Pelagonia, with its headquarters in Bitola;
3. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Bregalnica, with its headquarters in Shtip;
4. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Debar and Kitchevo, with its headquarters in Ohrid;
5. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Polog and Kumanovo, with its headquarters in Skopje;
6. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Povardarie, with its headquarters in Veles;
7. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy of Strumica, with its headquarters in Strumica;
8. The American-Canadian Macedonian Orthodox eparchy, with its headquarters in Toronto;
9. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy for Australia and New Zealand, with its headquarters in Melbourne, and
10. The Macedonian Orthodox eparchy for Europe, with its headquarters in Skopje.

At the head of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is the Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia, and at the head of the eparchies are the bishops. The eparchies present territorial units compounded of a certain number of parishes, organized in archpriestly regencies, and of monasteries located in that territory.

The organization of the Macedonian Orthodox Church is archbisopic - central and eparchical - local. The central administration is compound of the following legislative bodies - the Holy Synod and the Archbishopric Church People's Council. The local government is compound of the eparchies, the eparchical administrative committees, the eparchical administration, the church judiciary and prosecutory, the archpriestly regency, the parish and the monastery.

The Archbishop of Ohrid and Macedonia is the Head of the Macedonian Orthodox

Church, and the Holy Synod is the supreme authority of the Church concerning all the church, spiritual and canonical questions.

The Holy Synod, among others, performs the following activities: takes care of the maintenance and development of good and constructive relations of the Macedonian Orthodox Church with the Republic of Macedonia concerning the matters of common and special interest both for the Church and the people; takes special care of the eparchies and the church communities of the Macedonian Orthodox Church located outside the Republic of Macedonia; and, takes a special care of preservation and protection of the church, cultural and historical buildings in the state. It pays a special attention to the preservation and protection of the icons and other church relics which present a sacral and cultural-historical value. At the same time, it takes care of the organization and the work of the church galleries and other educational and cultural institutions of the Macedonian Orthodox Church.

The Holy Synod takes care of all church, spiritual and canonical issues, interprets the orthodox church teaching, observing the regulations of the Holy orthodox church and defining it on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition; keeps the dogmatical and canonical unity with all the local orthodox churches; takes care of the cleanliness of the Christian orthodox church, the religion and the morals; and, tries to destroy every wrong teaching.

The Holy Synod also takes care of the spreading of the orthodox religion and manages the activities of the internal and external mission of the Church, especially of the providing for and strengthening of the unity of the orthodox churches. Then, it takes a special care of the regularity and similarity of the performing of the Holy Secrets, the religious services and the prayers; it brings a program for religious teaching and takes care of the religious and moral education of the believers. A special attention pays to the foundation of high, advanced and secondary theological and monastic institutions and schools. It also performs other activities according to the Constitution of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and its other church regulations belongs to the competence of the Synod.

The Archbishopric church and people's council is the highest church, administrative and legislative body of the Macedonian Orthodox Church concerning all the economic, administrative and legislative issues, as well as the issues and problems which are not in jurisdiction of the Holy Synod.

According to the recent knowledge, the Macedonian Orthodox Church has about 1700 religious objects only in the Republic of Macedonia: churches, monasteries, small churches, chapels, theological educational institutions, libraries and other administrative buildings, and more than 70 religious object, churches and monasteries are located in the USA, Canada, Australia and the European countries. A great number of the churches and the monasteries originate from more than ten centuries and present important historical and cultural-educational monuments of the Macedonian people and Macedonia.

The Organization and the activity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church takes place within the Constitution and Law for the religious communities and religious groups in the Republic of Macedonia, which enables good and correct relations between the Church and the state. The Church develops its activities, mostly on religious-spiritual plan, for what there is a great satisfaction due to the fact that the number of believers and visitors in the churches is increased, especially in the larger cities. The Church performs it only

within the frames of the religion, so with a few exceptions, there are no important manifestations which would mean abuse of the religion.

Regarding the organization and activities of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, two very important questions and problems are permanently stated to the state structures. namely, the question of the returning of the properties to the Church, in the past expropriated by the state, and introducing full-time or alternative classes of religious instruction within the present educational system.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church treats these two questions as open, very serious and very important for the further spiritual prosperity and existence of the Church. It should be emphasized that in 1991 the Government of the Republic of Macedonia with a Decision has returned all legally or illegally expropriated churches and monasteries, which at the present are owned and managed by the Church.

One of the important regulations of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, besides the organization and the activity in the Republic of Macedonia, is the registration, the work and the activities of the Macedonian Orthodox Churches and Church communities outside, especially in the USA, Canada, Australia and some European countries. It is performed on legal basis, because these spiritual centers are also religious, national, social, humanitarian, cultural, educational and sports institutions.

For realization of their activities, these communities have got a wide support, first of all, by the governments of the appropriate countries and the Mother St.Clement Church . The foundation of these Macedonian church communities abroad has a great contribution to the determination of the national identity of the Macedonian emigrants in their new surroundings, no matter which part of Macedonia they originate from. Through these big spiritual, cultural and educational centers, through the priests in the church parishes, the Macedonian immigrants also get documents which testify about their determination as Macedonians, such as: birth, marriage and death certificates and other necessary acts which are officially and legally recognized by the appropriate legal administration.

Within the most of the church communities are organized internal Sunday schools where the mother's Macedonian language is being learned, the national history, geography and religion instruction. Also, in the church communities is developed the system of sections, such as: the literary, folklore, sports, cooking and others. A great number of newspapers, magazines, bulletins and other publications are being printed, TV and radio hours which play priceless role in the enrichment of the whole activities of the Macedonian emigrants are broadcasts.

The Macedonian Orthodox Church has a Secondary theological school in Skopje. The instruction at the school lasts for five school years. Within the Macedonian Orthodox Church more than twenty years successfully works the Theological faculty "St.Clement of Ohrid". Although the Macedonian Orthodox Church permanently insists on it, the Theological faculty is not a part of the "St.Cyril and Methodius" University in Skopje. Each year about 50 full-time and part-time students are being enrolled in this educational institution.

The organization and activities of the Macedonian Orthodox Church in the Republic of Macedonia and abroad continues in the frames of the Constitution and the legal regulations in order to serve to the orthodox believers. The Macedonian Orthodox Church has good relations with many churches, and tries to make a contact and communication with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Greek

Orthodox Church on an equal Christian orthodox basis. The Macedonian Orthodox Church tries to negotiate with the Serbian Orthodox Church, which would be in the interest for the orthodoxy both in Serbia and Macedonia, for the both churches, the believers and in the interest for the people of the SR of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Macedonia.

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ORGANIZACIJA I AKTIVNOSTI MAKEDONSKE PRAVOSLAVNE CRKVE

Slave Nikolovski-Katin

U radu se na informativan način govori o začecima, toku i ustanovljavanju MPC. Detaljnije se analizira njeno današnje ustrojstvo, školski sistem i niz aktivnosti koje ostvaruje u domicilnom prostoru, posebno u dijaspori.

Ključne reči: *Makedonska pravoslavna crkva, Republika Makedonija, makedonska dijaspora*