

The Status of the Bishop in Church

Believers know that the bishop is the head of the archdiocese which is the local Church and contains all the characteristics of a Catholic (universal) Church. It is holy and apostolic; it is not divided. This united Church under the leadership of the bishop exists in each of our parishes; the archdiocese takes decisions in all places. The bishop takes the decisions everywhere. Being a father, he decides with love and according to the benefit of the local parish; he decides after discussing with the priest and the parish council because love is the bond between us and he who loves, does not oppress.

We have taken great steps together so that parishes don't take decisions alone. Without any doubt, the Lord's spirit exists in all places; however, until this moment, we haven't reached perfection which is the constant consultation between the priest and his council and the bishop so that all our works could be fulfilled with decency and organization as the apostle says.

This means that we should ask for the bishop's blessing for every work. Starting from construction, every work such as restoration, changing the church's building, drawing on the walls requires a clear permission from the spiritual authority. Is it acceptable for the bishop to visit a parish and see new things that he hasn't heard of before?

The canonical existence which is theologically based is that of the archdiocese as a whole, and this archdiocese has a leader. This is the position of the Orthodox Church. We are one, and this unity is based on consultation and agreement and the divine blessing is transmitted to the believers through the person that has received the spiritual leadership. Surely, some of our brothers carry an isolationist disease and a disease of feeling that they are free in their village's Church. They say that their fathers established it and the believers inherited what they have given to the Church. According to the Gospel, a giver must give freely and not ask for anything for himself or for his children and grandchildren. It is a grace from his Lord to give. It is a blessing for him and the only thing that he should get from us is our thankfulness. However, this doesn't give him or his family an authority over the Church.

The local Church exists through the efforts of all people. Its members consult each other hoping for a constant work. However, the spiritual leader is who commands the work. We hear such words sometimes: "Church properties are ours. We do whatever we want in our village". Actually, according to the civil law, those properties are for the whole sect, and the delegate, in front of the state and the law, is the head of the Church.

From the spiritual aspect, the property is only for God. The whole Church, i.e. the Church of the archdiocese, represented by the bishop, is responsible of dealing with these properties.

In addition to that, there are technical things which only specialized people know about. Therefore, the archdiocese is surrounded by experienced people for the benefit of all. If we became brothers or sons, the bishop's opinion wouldn't be isolated anymore.

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