Communique of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church Regarding Anti-Semitic Posters

30/04/2005

Upon learning the facts with regard to the anti-Semitic posters and graffiti that appeared in Belgrade on March 22 of this year, as well as of earlier, similar and in some cases even more blatant, inhumane and malicious demonstrations of prejudice and intolerance toward the Jewish people, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, convened today, March 24, in prayerful memory of the innocent victims of the bombing by the NATO alliance, wishes to communicate the following

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1. Once again, as we have done in previous years, we most strongly condemn every form and every manifestation of anti-Semitism. This phenomenon is unacceptable theologically, morally, civilizationally and in every other respect.

2. At the same time, we decisively and unconditionally reject every attempt, regardless of its origin, to deny, devalue or minimize the Holocaust against the Jews in World War II. Such attempts are especially painful and insulting to us now, upon the commemoration of the 60 year anniversary of the closing of the death camps in Auschwitz and Jasenovac, where Serbs and Jews together suffered persecution and died solely because of who they were. Empathy and compassion towards the suffering and losses of the Jewish people must be demonstrated exceptionally by us as Serbs, both as Orthodox Christians and as a people that in its distant and not so distant past has itself been subjected to great suffering, and continues to suffer today in Kosovo and Metohija. If our own wounds pain us, and they pain us, then we must also be pained by the wounds of all people and all nations, and especially a nation whose losses to genocide number in the millions.

3. We also reject and condemn all calumny and false attributions regarding the supposed criminal psychological makeup of the Jewish people. Our people and our faithful are very

well aware of what it means to be calumnied, excluded and vilified. The Jewish people knows this through its own painful experience better than any other people. Hence the sin of those individuals and groups that undertake a campaign of calumny against the Jews is all the greater.

4. We are convinced that the appropriate state authorities will undertake all measures to prevent such unfortunate incidents. Peace, freedom, safety and joint life for all people and all ethnic and religious communities in mutual respect and cooperation for the common good does not merely represent a modern European code for public and private behavior or an international responsibility on the part of all member states of the United Nations; more than that, for centuries it has represented a moral imperative that follows from our faith in the God of love and peace, and from our Christian and Orthodox conscience. This spiritual value is without doubt shared with us by other Christians, as well as by the faithful of other religious communities, first of all the Jews, to whom, according to the words of the Holy Apostle Paul, ?belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom 9:4-5) Elsewhere the same Apostle says in his own name and in ours: ?Glory and honor and peace for every one who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.” (Rom 2:10)

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