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CHRIST IS RISEN!

THE EDITORS OF CHURCH NEWS GREET ALL OUR READERS UPON THE RADIANT FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST AND WISH THEY MAY MEET IT WITH SPIRITUAL JOY AND GOOD HEALTH.

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**PASCHAL EPISTLE OF
HIS EMINENCE VITALY,
METROPOLITAN OF NEW YORK AND EASTERN AMERICA,
FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA**

**CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY HE IS RISEN!**

**I greet all the children of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia
on the Great Feast of the Resurrection of Christ.**

Remember, my dear ones, that as the bird is held up and lies through the air using two wings, so we can spiritually live and strive towards our eternal salvation with fasting and prayer. Prayer leads to fasting, while fasting purifies prayer, makes it more sincere, more heartfelt and genuine. These two virtues are inseparable: one strengthens the other. We are all people, and as human beings we consist of the body, in which as in its house, lives the soul. Fasting together with prayer addresses needs of the whole man – his soul and, of course, his body.

To fast in the soul means keeping silence more and praying more frequently by oneself saying, "Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." At first this prayer will be only in our minds, then, because of the mind's prayerful effort, suddenly, we know not how, this prayer passes into our hearts. It is possible that at this moment we may even weep and in this way we are baptized anew in the unseen font of our tears. There are all kinds of tears: there are tears of exaltation, tears of joy, tears of sadness, but the most precious are tears of compunction and repentance.

Sincere repentance is a gift of God such that, although we may not have committed any severe fall into sin or evil deed, we still see ourselves in our true light, see how weak we are, how much we sin in the mind, in our feelings, and especially in our imagination. Looking honestly at ourselves, we have nothing left to say except, "Lord God have mercy on me, help me, and forgive, forgive, forgive, forgive me!" Then forgiveness will come into our souls like Pascha, and we are as it were born anew. And if the Lord should forgive, who will condemn us? Our sins are forgiven us at each confession, but we must remember that there is the "Great Forgiveness" which consists in this, that by God's mercy, we unconsciously stop committing certain specific sins, such as sinful acts, words, deeds and thoughts, but at the same time we continue to feel and be aware of our profound sinfulness. The most perfect man is the one who, precisely as he is a man, sincerely feels he is a great sinner. An example of this was St. Seraphim of Sarov.

The Lord Almighty Himself came down upon earth, through the Ever-Virgin Mary, as an ordinary man but, being God, He was sinless and the most Holy. For our salvation He suffered, was crucified and wondrously rose from the dead, thereby showing us path to our salvation, which is the path of fasting, prayer and repentance. That is what we must strive towards and what we must do of the Lord. Amen.

† Metropolitan Vitaly

First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

Pascha 2001

**PASCHAL EPISTLE OF
HIS EMINENCE VALENTIN,
METROPOLITAN OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR,
FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AUTONOMOUS CHURCH**

CHRIST IS RISEN!

The greatest of all the sacraments is completed: the Resurrection of Christ -- the victory of the Life Giver over the death. There came the most wonderful day of life of the faithful, the one for which we have waited so long and for which we were preparing ourselves during the long 40 days.

We are ready to repeat tirelessly the wonderful words: "Christ is risen! Verily, He is risen!" How joyfully does the heart beat! And how is one urged to cry out with full power: "Lord, I thank Thee for letting me once again to live through such moments!"

The light of the teachings of the God Man Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Men becomes a clear way for an Orthodox Christian. The warmth of the faith constantly urges us to serve our neighbor. Peacefulness renews the essence and brings forth deep blissfulness.

We do confess that by His terrible suffering and His glorious resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ granted us rebirth, that He established the Church, which directs us, mortals, to the path of goodness and love, so that we would be worthy heirs of God's Kingdom.

God gave us power to grow and perfect ourselves, to reach to great wisdom. We sincerely believe that the human mind will be enlightened by the knowledge of the Truth, in manner similar to beauty, which like the sun's light is pouring over the whole world.

The resurrected Christ makes joy brighter and wider and without Him the fullness of happiness is unthinkable and with Him even misfortune is comforting. He is our never-setting Sun, the source of our resurrection into everlasting life. With His love He attracts to Himself human souls, which like tiny sparkles, lit by the incomprehensibly great wisdom of the Creator, unite with Him forever.

Glory to the resurrected Christ for the growth of our flock, for the sounds of bell-ringing in the churches of the Russian Orthodox Church not only in the Homeland, but also far outside her borders!

We are especially joyful that the people faithful and loyal to the ideals of God's Church return to the Russian Orthodox Church, and remain faithful to Orthodox teachings.

To our deep regret, some arch-pastors, pastors and faithful of the Russian Church Abroad have stepped away from the path of true confession and directed their steps toward the path of ruin, the one which the ecumenists go.

It is sad to see a separation where there should have been unity. It is deplorable to realize that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which was once a bearer of undamaged Orthodoxy, has today diverted from the path of truth and directed her steps to the path of perdition.

We are extremely grateful to the resurrected Christ for making us worthy on the last jubilee year to glorify the blessed first Abbess, the Nun Alexandra (Melgunov) and other blessed residents of the Diveyevo convent.

By the mercy of God, and considering the uncompromising service the God's Church during all his lifetime and also the incorrupt venerable relics of Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky), the champion and confessor of Orthodoxy, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church resolved to glorify him on May 8/1. May the Lord help us through the intercessions of this blessed God pleasing zealot for the salvation of Russian people in the Fatherland as well as abroad.

May the day of this bright and all joyful holy day of Christ's Resurrection bring us nearer to the One Who suffered for our sins and by His death destroyed everlasting death for the sake of us fallen.

Grant us O Lord, to worship Thee, to venerate Thee, to see Thee with our inner eyes, to feel the penetration of Thy light into our soul from which trembles all that exists.

From all my heart I congratulate you on occasion of bright holy day of Christ's Resurrection! Prayerfully I wish you to have from the resurrected Christ, the Savior, peace, joy and to preserve steadfastness in the Orthodox faith and teachings.

With the prayer to Him resurrected from death, Christ, bending my knees and heart I pray, "that all of us be one in Christ Jesus, our Lord"! Again I greet you on the occasion of the bright and joyful day of our salvation – the Resurrection of Christ.

Asking for your holy prayers,
President of the Synod of Bishops
Metropolitan Valentin

THE HEIGHT OF SHAMELESSNESS

Our publication has received a photo-copy of a letter by Hilarion, Archbishop of Sydney and Australia-New Zealand, addressed to Priest Oleg Oreshkin, his clergyman at one time in the city of Dandenong. The letter in his own handwriting is typed on the official diocesan letterhead with the address and the telephone number. We publish this letter below:

"February 14/27th, 2001. Clean Tuesday

Beloved in God Father Oleg,

I congratulate you on account of the start of Great Lent.

You ask me about the reason for the Council of Bishops' letter (Oct. 2000) to the Serbian Patriarch Pavle. The matter was, as it happens, that Patriarch Pavle twice wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly, but received no answer. This was made known at the Council's sessions. Vladyka Metropolitan explained to the Council that no letters from Patriarch Pavle had reached him. Then the members of the Council decided that decency required a letter address him in the name of the whole assembly. This was the origin of this letter, which now troubles so many in Russia.

I assure you that it was written not to ask for the mediation of the Serbian Patriarch in some sort of negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate. Not one of our hierarchs is tempted by the Moscow Patriarchate; all know what she is and that it is impossible to unite with her, or even enter into a dialogue, while she remains in Ecumenism and has not renounced the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius.

Yet, the Moscow Patriarchate is putting pressure upon the Serbian Church to sever all her relationships with the ROCOR with which she is in communion. It seems that in the letters of Patriarch Pavle to our Metropolitan were questions regarding this matter.

I repeat that no one among hierarchs of the ROCOR wants to enter into a compromise nor wishes any kind of union with the MP until she totally purifies herself from these delusions.

With love in Christ,
Archbishop Hilarion"

This entire letter of Archbishop Hilarion which replies to the question of his former clergyman troubling his conscience – is a very crudely fabricated lie. Not one word in the minutes # 9 of the meeting of the Bishop's Council for October 13/26, 2000, ever mentions a not only non-existent correspondence between Metropolitan Vitaly and the Serbian

Patriarch, but in general any reason for writing this disgraceful letter. It is obvious that no one answers letters never received and (even less – does an entire assembly of bishops). And the more so, when the "Information Bulletin" of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP (# 3, p. 51-52) and Vertograd Inform, based on the same information from the MP, widely publicized part of the correspondence between Ridiger and the Serbian Pavle regarding the MP demand to sever communion between the Serbs and Church Abroad. The Serbian Patriarch answered this demand with a very humiliating agreement in which he writes about the Church Abroad using no capitals, yet in quotation marks.

"Church News" published the very same information in issue # 6 (88) of July-September. So, there was no reason whatsoever to write about it, and in the name of the whole Council of Bishops to write to the Serbian Patriarch. This was information that long ago became public knowledge to all of those who are interested in church matters.

In the issue # 8 (90) of "Church News," according to the approved minutes of the Bishops' Council's meetings, we published almost all the most important decisions of the Council, including also the letter to Serbian Patriarch which states that there should **"come about the desirable rapprochement and, may God grant, the spiritual union between two of the dissolved parts of the Russian Church, the one in the Homeland and the one which happened to be abroad. We beg Your Holiness to assist in this."** (emphasis by "Ch. N").

In his letter to the editors of The Herald of the German Diocese, Bishop Barnabas of Cannes writes: "In the beginning, this appeal was understood by me, as well as by some hierarchs, to be a polite expression of gratitude to the Serbian Patriarch for his reception of His Eminence Archbishop Mark... and the end result, during the Council's meeting, there was read only once a quite different appeal, which had nothing to do with the supposed expression of gratitude."

What does the archbishop rely on: the forgetfulness of the Russian people, their limited knowledge of the church affairs or the hope that if he can hide behind a bishop's mandia, there will be few who would dare to accuse him of an overt lie?!

However, to those few who happen to know him from the church administrative field, this deceitful letter does not present a major surprise. The only difference between the words and acts now is – that the lie is sealed with an official letterhead and has his handwritten signature. Not even the beginning of the Great Lent helped in any way!

One more thing: the term "Clean Week," was invented a few years back by some eccentric in Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville. In Russia there was a tradition of Clean Monday when the housewife was freed from cooking non-fasting foods at the beginning of the Great Fast. The designation of "clean" days for the whole week became common here only via the Jordanville Calendar, and at that, not too long ago!

WHAT WAS UNTHINKABLE BECOMES "NORMAL"

The jubilee issue of "Pravoslavnii Put" ("The Orthodox Path") for 2000 (a supplement to the "Orthodox Rus" magazine) published its history from the day of its first issue to the present. On page 15 is an explanation of the most recent history of this publication. In a very extensive first footnote we read:

"At that time the following episode in the history of the 'Orthodox Path' occurred. In the Paris newspaper 'Russkaya Mysl' ('Russian Thought') of April 23, 1992, information about the publication in Russia of a magazine 'Pravoslavnyii Put' came to light. The magazine was to be published by the 'Department for religious education and catechism of the Moscow Patriarchate' (emphasis by "Ch.N."). In this connection the publishers of the Holy Trinity Monastery have sent to the above mentioned Department a letter in which said, among other things, that "It is already about 50 years since the 'Pravoslavnii Put' began to be published by the Brotherhood of St. Job of Pochayev and is known to readers as a ecclesiastical theologically-philosophical annual publication... Probably you are not familiar with the Brotherhood's publications, since you have chosen such a title. Holy Trinity Monastery has the copyrights to 'Pravoslavnii Put'. Then in the letter there was a request to the Department not to use the name of 'Pravoslavnii Put' for the new theological publication to be issued. One has to give credit to the Department of Catechism, which immediately responded with their explanation. A letter, signed by the President of the Department, Abbot John (Economtsev) stated: 'while expressing gratitude for your letter, we would like to explain the motives that made us choose the name of the magazine.... Certainly, we are very well acquainted with your annual publication, of which we have the highest opinion. The announcement made in the 'Risky Myself', which happened to be the reason for your letter, stated: 'The magazine also hopes to develop the traditions of the ecclesiastical year-book 'Pravoslavnii Put' (ROCOR) to promote in this manner the cause of common ecclesiastical peace and unity. We thought that the publication of a magazine more frequently issued – quarterly and then monthly – justified the use of the name selected by us. But, considering your wish, we have decided to change the name of our magazine to the 'Path of Orthodoxy' . . . Please permit us to hope for cooperation of our magazine with your year-book 'Pravoslavnyii Put'. This episode seems to be very symbolic; because it testifies that 'Pravoslavnii Put' remained viable in the post-perestroika period and returned to Russia in its own form and not as a magazine reborn by someone (even with the best intentions).

Certainly, during the lifetime of the three First Hierarchs of the ROCOR of the blessed memory there was no possibility of any sorts of contact with the MP, and the exchange of pleasantries – even less. And now, quite open, with impunity, "the cuckoo is praising the rooster, because he praises the cuckoo"!

DO NOT TRUST SLANDERERS

This is a title of a short article, sent to us by the former Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Bartholomew.

"More and more people are being convinced that the change of the course of the ROCOR, leading to a trampling upon the Orthodox canons, toward submission to the ecumenist MP is not a simple misunderstanding. No, this is a well thought-out action that was prepared in secret and with all thoroughness.

It is sufficient to remind ourselves of the voyages of Archbishop Mark, his meetings with Ridiger and other representatives of the MP. Despite the strict demands of Metropolitan Vitaly to stop these treacherous actions, Vladyka Mark continued his work, only a bit more carefully.

The negotiations and concelebrations with the Serbian ecumenists and others finally led to present situation, namely – no acceptance by the flock of their bishops' activities. It is quite clear that the present body of the Synod of Bishops went too far in their aspiration to unite with the MP and -- through the Serbian ecumenists – with all of 'world Orthodoxy'.

On the agenda there is necessity to make a stand against the Synod's ecumenist efforts and to unite all the powers for defense of the Orthodox Faith, in which the ROCOR always stood.

It is necessary to keep in mind the sad experience of previous years, when open and hidden enemies succeeded in splitting the parishes in Russia, and provoked unrest in the relations between Russian hierarchs.

It was especially difficult for the first parishes that exited from the MP. Let us recall the persecutions was submitted the parish in Suzdal. Then malicious lies were permitted to circulate, slanders of the main Russian bishop Valentin and not on the part of the MP, but also by some ROCOR bishops.

Despite violations of the canons, without presenting of the accusation, without being called before an ecclesiastical court, Bishop Valentin was 'defrocked' in absentia. Almost simultaneously the same was done by the MP, which clearly looks like an agreement.

But a lie has short legs, the slanderers are disgraced and Suzdalites successfully stand watch over the purity of Orthodox Faith, resolutely restore desecrated churches. The Synod, chaired by Archbishop Valentin, cheerfully looks to the future, assured of the rightness of their cause.

March 6, 2001

Archimandrite Bartholomew"

This appeal of Archimandrite Bartholomew provoked an extremely malicious reaction toward Metropolitan Valentin by those in charge of the Internet "List" in the form of "A Sad Note from the Editors".

The most amazing thing is that the organizers of this Internet "List" in the beginning made quote correct conclusions, when they analyzed the treacherous Epistle of the Council of ROCOR bishops in October of 2000, signed by the Hieromonk Paisios. Yet it seems that the temporary suspension from serving resulted in the "splitting" of the stand against the errors of contemporary "Sacred Administration" of the ROCOR and the authors of this note resort to typically Jesuitical polemical methods, even accusing Archimandrite Bartholomew of "a regular series of untruthfulness".

At the beginning the "administrative" relations between the Synod of Bishops and Russian Hierarchs was discontinued after the Church Abroad for nearly 2 years ignored any official communication coming from Suzdal and the subsequent outrageous violations of the canons by the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops – finally led to discontinuation of the eucharistic relations. The two different moments of this sad history of the Russian Free Church and the ROCOR – quite naturally are formulated in the slightly different form, according to the proper case.

The Ukase by Patriarch Tikhon # 362 was made for use in Russia and within her borders. Only the unprecedented circumstances after the 1917 revolution made it possible also to use it abroad for benefit of constructing a church administration. Yet the successors of Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory, after receiving under their omophorion the Suzdal parishes and after restoring in Russia the canonically valid hierarchy on the one hand and on the other – overwhelmed by a lust for power – imagined themselves to be the supreme power in whole Russia and by this they themselves created a schism in Russia and abroad. They utterly forgot that the "Statutes of the ROCOR" has not a single word giving any authority the power to declare itself to be "the central church power" in Russia and abroad. (Decision of the Synod of Bishops of March 26/April 8, 1994, #7/90/76). The Russian Hierarchs were striving to preserve unity until it became clear that the very existence of their parishes was at stake and to the loss of practically all the parochial churches restored by them. There was a short period when the Synod Abroad, without an investigation nor court procedure), simultaneously suspended (instead of the Council of Bishops) all five Bishops of Russia, without giving a second thought to their flocks of many thousands. The Russian Bishops have much more right to be guided by the Patriarchal ukase than the ROCOR, since this ukase was made for the Church in Russia and not for that Abroad. It is amazing that in a fit of temper the editors of the "List" do not understand even this simple truth!

It is a pity that we do not know what sort of advantage for the rebuilding of the church in Russia the authors of the "List" see when they attack the most prominent, convinced opponent of the Moscow Patriarchate and also the first hierarch of 8 Bishops, one third of whom are Catacomb Church members!

There is no way to suspect that they are consciously helping Moscow Patriarchate in its war against the whole Russian Church.

Is it possible that the editors of the "List" had not noticed until now that the tragic schism between the ROCOR and the Free Russian Church happened through instigation of agents of the KGB/Moscow Patriarchate? Instead of trying to unite all the powers of like-minded people in the struggle against the enemies of Christ's Church in Russia as well as Abroad, they, without giving it a second thought, do quite the opposite.

It is well known that when the Lord wants to punish someone, He takes away his mind and even from intelligent and ecclesiastically well-educated people.

A LETTER FROM BISHOP BARNABAS TO METROPOLITAN VITALY

His Grace Bishop Barnabas has sent us a copy of his letter, written under the letterhead of his vicariate.

Cannes, February 15/28, 2001

Holy Apostle Onisimos

Your Eminence, Vladyka Metropolitan, venerable archpastors, beloved fathers, and sisters of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad!

Our supreme administrative level is the Council of Bishops. Yet, while recognizing the priority of the Council it was always considered necessary that it agree with the entire body of the Church. Many examples from church history are known when subsequent councils had to cancel the decisions of the erroneous previous ones.

After the Council of Bishops of 2000, which resulted in numerous questions, objections and disagreements, which 'are ripping apart the unity of the Church', the Synod of Bishops from 6 to 8 of February of the current year not only did not hear this voice of the clergy and the flock, but even reaffirmed in the most unconditional manner all the Council's declarations and decisions of 2000, calling all the children of the Church to obedience to the ecclesiastical authorities.

As a direct disagreement with the declaration of the Synod, three Russian archpastors repudiated their signatures of the erroneous decisions.

While not signing the Council's Epistle, with them together I acknowledge, that I have thoughtlessly put my signature to the letter to the Serbian Patriarch Paul and I do repent of this.

But today, one cannot remain content only with repentance while seeing how steadily and successfully a group of bishops, headed by Archbishop Mark of Germany, leads irreversibly to change our ecclesiastical life into a "wished for rapprochement" and "spiritual unity" with the Moscow Patriarchate and the other official Churches, gradually leading to a distancing from the true confession of the Orthodox Faith for the sake of prosperity in the contemporary world.

The clear impossibility of straightening out this newly introduced ecclesiastical course that was established after the Bishops' Council and the Synod meeting, force us to take the only salvific path, to preserve the spiritual liberty of our Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

Therefore, I wall off my clergy and myself and flock from the so-called bishops 'prior to a conciliar deliberation' of this new course.

In his letter to the Sergianist Archimandrite Leo Yegorov, Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd gave the following explanations:

'I would never consider myself to be a schismatic, even as a single one, as once one of the confessors. The matter is in no way in the amounts, do not forget it even for a minute: "when the Son of men cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). And it may be that the last 'rebels' against the traitors of the Church and the supporters of Her destruction will be not only bishops and archpriests, but the simple faithful, as when by Christ's cross there stood and beheld His last suffering breath only few simple souls, which were close to Him'.

'Do not judge me strictly and clearly understand the following:

1. I am in no way a schismatic and I do not call for schism, but for a purifying of the Church from those, who sow real schism and create it.
2. To point out to some one his errors and wrongfulness is not schism.
3. A refusal to accept sound chastisements and directions is indeed a schism and trampling upon the truth.

In passing you mention that among the ways to the truth: 'Christ showed us one more way: 'love each other', which you believe I missed in my actions! In reply to this I would remind you, Father, the wonderful conclusion of Metropolitan Philaret in his sermon on the love for enemies: 'abhor the enemies of God, defeat the enemies of thy Homeland and love your enemies'.

Defenders of Sergius say that the canons permit one to leave a bishop only for heresy, condemned by a council, but the acts of Metropolitan Sergius are enough to apply this rule.... And, besides, the canons could not foresee everything. And is it possible to argue: what is worse or more damaging than heresy, when there is knife being plunged into the very heart of the Church? 'Let us not little by little and unnoticeably loose this liberty which the Lord Jesus Christ granted us by His Blood in order to free all the humanity' (Canon 8, of the Third Ecumenical Council).

'Do not fear, the little flock, the Lord is with us! And if the Lord be with us, who can be against us'? Do not forget that for us the most fearful thing is to depart from the Truth, which is Christ.'

Bishop Barnabas

From a quite reliable source in France, on March 6 it became known that the letter of Bishop Barnabas resulted in the immediate closure of his vicariate, and by now we received an ukase by Archbishop Ambrose about the closure of the vicariate of Cannes worded as follows:

February 16/March 2001

161/BA/W

To the clergy and flock of the French vicariate of the Western Europe Diocese

I was just informed of an Internet letter from His Grace Bishop Barnabas of Cannes URL: <http://www.russia-talk.com/otkliki/ot-60.htm>. I have not spoken to him about either the authenticity or the contents of this document.

In order to avoid new indignation [sic] and disorders in the bosom of the Western Europe diocese, temporarily, until this matter is clarified, I release the clergy and the flock of the French vicariate from submission to Bishop Barnabas. Bishop Ambrose.

As with all of the Ukases by Archbishop Ambrose, this latest one demonstrates his amazing administrative illiteracy. First of all, before even finding out about the matter and verifying the authenticity of the Internet information (for it seems that Archbishop Ambrose himself is not quite sure of it) he rushes to violate the rules. Besides, this is the very first case when Internet information is accepted as an official document.

According to the "Statutes of the ROCOR" in the section about vicar and diocesan bishops, paragraph 83 states: "Vicar bishops are elected, appointed and retired by the Council of Bishops and in the intermediate period, by the Synod of Bishops, with agreement of the diocesan bishops, through request of the written response of all of the bishops".

Since between the date of mailing the letter of Bishop Barnabas to Metropolitan Vitaly on February 15/28 and closing of the Cannes vicariate only a few days passed and the mail between USA and Europe takes no less than a week's time – the written request and also a return response of ALL the Hierarchs would be absolutely impossible. This means that two, perhaps three, members of the Synod violated the rules and by themselves decided to close a vicariate they didn't like at the present moment!

ABOUT THE DIOCESE OF WESTERN EUROPE

In our last issue, # 1 (94) for January-February, we informed our readers that two archpriests of the ROCOR – Fr. George Larin (Eastern American diocese) and Fr. Steven Pavlenko (Western American diocese) -- on orders from the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops went to Europe on an errand to calm down the ecclesiastical storm in those parts of the world.

By now we have a bit more information about the latest events in the Western Europe diocese and in particular, about the "peace-making labors" of the above mentioned archpriests.

On February 11, the Sunday of the Prodigal Son, Fr. George Larin in his sermon earnestly tried to persuade the Geneva parishioners to unconditionally obey Archbishop Ambrose, telling them that otherwise they will turn into Protestants and spoke a lot about love of neighbor.

Protodeacon Herman Trinadzaty in a private conversation with one of Geneva parishioners accidentally found out that the American fathers were heading to France and wanted to go to the Lyons church, but he himself and the rector of the church, Fr. Quentin de Castelbajac, were absent from that city. Via telephone contacts made during a car trip, the rector and his deacon agreed to meet with American archpriests in a certain place. Yet, when Fathers Quentin and Herman arrived at the agreed place, Fathers Larin and Pavlenko were not there. It was discovered that they had gone to a near-by restaurant. From there, they talked by telephone with Fathers Herman and Quentin and, without showing any interest in seeing the Lyons church, they went to Provemont, where the Lesna Convent is located.

It is hard to see what their peace making accomplished, but it is known that out of approximately 30 nuns – 9 left the convent. Six of them were the catacomb nuns and they returned to Russia and 3 – temporarily settled in a private apartment in Paris, waiting for possibility to some how arrange their lives under new circumstances.

On the Feast of Meeting of the Lord in the Temple, Fathers George and Steven delivered the Synod's Ukase suspending Fr. Constantine Fedorov from serving in the Brussels Memorial Church on its feast day. Probably, his excellent letter to Metropolitan Vitaly also "helped" achieve this. At the same time it became known that Fr. Constantine was given 3 weeks to leave the Lesna Convent. His matushka is already in Moscow at his request. At present it is not clear if he is still under the suspension or not.

On February 16, the American peacemakers went to Brussels. The rector of the church, Fr. Nicholas Semenov was not informed of their arrival and was not in the church. Archbishop Ambrose supplied the archpriests with the quite astonishing ukase that in translation from the French reads:

"I, the undersigned Ambrose, Bishop of Geneva and Western Europe, in the world Prince Canakuzen, born September 16, 1947, residing in Vevey (Suisse) at the above address, acting rector according to regulation, the president of the Parish Council of the Russian St. Job Church, built in 1930 in Brussels, on 8, Manoir St.

-----INSTRUCT-----

Fathers George Larin and Steven Pavlenko directed by the Synod of Bishops to serve a Liturgy on February 17 and 18 at the above address.

In order to accomplish this they will be handed the keys to the church by one of the parishioners, who possess them. If this will be not possible, the above-mentioned fathers are authorized to call a locksmith and force the church door and, if necessary, to put in new locks. If possible, this should be done in the presence of some member of the Parish Council.

After the service the church keys are to be handed over to Fr. Stephen Weerts in accord with my Ukase # 115/BA/W of January 15, 2001.

Issued in Vevey on February 17th, 2001, signed Bishop Ambrose, according to regulation".

Fathers Larin and Pavlenko arrived to the church on Saturday, February 17, where had gathered a group of anxious parishioners, who managed to call the police. The former prince's title and Suisse citizenship as the ruling bishop did not duly impress the police, which prevented a forcing of the church door and was driving around the church every half hour, watching the church on Saturday and Sunday. For some reason (!) the peace making fathers were joined by three young

clergymen from the MP, who fluently spoke French. All of them came in civilian clothes, and then one departed for a short period and came back in a cassock!

On February 28 a letter from Archbishop Ambrose to Fr. Nicholas Semenov whom he suspended was widely circulated. The archbishop informed him that he was arriving on February 28 and planned to serve on Saturday and Sunday.

According to information we received, Archbishop Ambrose indeed arrived in Brussels on time and he took a room in a hotel situated almost opposite the church. The parishioners stood around it like a wall and Archbishop Ambrose unavoidably had to see this. To avoid a scandal, Archbishop Ambrose decided not to serve in the memorial church, but instead in the Resurrection church, also in Brussels, with the rector Stephen Weerts.

After some negotiations between the Western Europe clergy and the Synod of Bishops, the suggestion was made that they commemorate Archbishop Ambrose, while Synod promised to deliberate on the situation in this diocese not later than the week of Lord's Entrance in Jerusalem. Will the Synod stick to its promise, or it is a time saving action remains to be seen.... Meanwhile, it is known, that the next Synod meeting will be held at some time after Pascha!

A parishioner of the Geneva parish has sent us a flier of a planned spiritual concert that was announced from the church ambo after the Liturgy.

On the flier in large letters is printed "Psalms" in Hebrew, Russian and French.

The concert was held in the Geneva music conservatory on March 11, 5.00 PM. Only the Psalms will be sung. Participants in the concert will be: Jews, under conduction Muelstein, the were Russian choir of the Geneva cathedral, directed by Alexander Diakov and some "Christians", directed by Rachel Ishkell!

It is self-evident that the cathedral choir participated in this outrage (and during Great Lent!) with the permission of the ruling bishop!

On March 19th, Archbishop Ambrose composed an very troubling repentance declaration that was to be read before the Crucifix and the Gospel and then signed by Fr. Nicholas Semenov, the rector of the Memorial Church in Brussels. **Father Nicholas categorically refused to obey the demand of Archbishop Ambrose.**

The parishioners headed by the Church Warden Peter Kotchubey are unanimously and very resolutely supporting their rector. Archbishop Ambrose also insists that the keys to the church be handed over to Priest Stephen Weerts, but it is already clear that if he gets them it will be only after a court decision.

On February 15th Alexis Ridiger came to Bern and gave an interview to an ITAR-TASS correspondent regarding "reunion" of the ROCOR with the MP. If there never was a union, how can there be a reunion? In this interview he stated:

"With the passage of time the schism between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and MP will heal". He stressed: "I believe that time is healing all the ills and schisms. It will heal also this schism, because the Russian Church Abroad and the Church of Moscow Patriarchate – this is flesh of the flesh and blood of the blood of the same people".

"At the present time all causes that earlier justified our division have disappeared. When the Synod of the Church Outside Russian was formed at the beginning of the twenties in Sremski Karlovci, Metropolitan Anthony said that this was a temporary institution until such time when the Church of Russia became free. And when the Church receives freedom we will give an account of our activity to the Patriarch of Moscow".

The Patriarch criticized "the well thought out reasons" given to hinder unity. "Before, the lack of the canonization of the Royal Family was given as a reason. Now the Royal Family is canonized. The Moscow Patriarchate is also accused for participation in the Ecumenical movement. But we can not remain in isolation, we have to be in communion with other Christian churches and witness to Orthodoxy," the Patriarch said.

There are serious reasons to believe that Archbishop Ambrose was in touch with Ridiger while he was in Switzerland, while there is quite reliable information about the numerous meetings of this ROCOR bishop with Cyril Gundiayev of the MP.

A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MP EVALUATES ROCOR HIERARCHS

Some activists of the MP continue to favorably react to last year's October ROCOR Council of Bishops. Just recently a certain Cyril Florov (a spokesman for the institute of SNG countries) of the MP published an article with commentaries on the Internet "List".

Florov believes that the main task of contemporary church order is to "consolidate around the ROC all the zealots of the Orthodoxy of the holy fathers who oppose Ecumenism, who retain the old calendar" and also – "the overcoming of separations" with the ROCOR.

After quite sharply criticizing the "foreigners" for whom "the opposition to the Moscow Patriarchate has become an end in itself" – the author makes note that the decisions of the Bishops' Council of the Church Abroad "...apparently has changed the situation. And this should not be overlooked".

Then we are informed that the "key figures of the ROCOR, who stand for a policy of reunion of the Russian Church are Archbishop Mark (Arndt) of Berlin and Germany, a native German, splendid philologist, who in his mature years through contact with Russian culture has become Orthodox, an expert in Russian and Serbian literature, one who maintains the closest ties with the Russian Church in the Fatherland and conservative circles of the Serbian Church and also Laurus (Shkurla), Archbishop of Syracuse and Trinity – a native Carpatho-Russian. He is the bearer and continuer of the genuine spiritual and national consciousness of Carpatho-Russia, which for ages considered herself to be the part of the Russian world, and opposed the Galician-Ukrainian separatists. Behind Vladyka Laurus there stands a considerable part of the Carpatho-Russian Diaspora in the USA. In this way, in case of reunion, Vladyka Laurus might do quite a bit for all of

Russia and that inseparable part of her – Carpatho-Russia. Thus a peculiar “spiritually geopolitical triangle” has been created: Russia, Serbia, and Germany. The connecting link between the MP, ROCOR and the Serbian Church is Archbishop Mark”.

Then, for the faithful children of ROCOR, there follow some more interesting “revelations”. Florov states, “As it was expected, the decisions of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, separated “the goats from the sheep”. On one side “there indeed began a dialogue, the initiator of which is the Odessa Metropolia of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of MP, who is a leader of the pro-Moscow sympathizers. At the jubilee conference, dedicated to the second millennium of Christ’s Nativity, representatives of the ROCOR actively participated with the clergy of UOC & the MP. Analogous dialogue is developing in Siberia between Archbishop of Tobolsk Dimitry (ROC MP) and Bishop of Siberia, Evtikhy (ROCOR). As was expected, the decisions of the ROCOR Council of Bishops were the subject of attempts at obstruction by “irreconcilable foreigners” in Russia, who started to raise obstructions for Bishops Mark, Laurus and Evtikhy”.

There are only two ROCOR bishops in Ukraine: Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Agathangel. Well, which one of them (or their clergy) “actively participated with the UOC MP” in the jubilee celebrations?

Will we ever find out from them the real truth? In any case, so far there has been no information of any retractions from them.

“PASTORAL CONFERENCES” IN THE DIOCESES OF WESTERN AND EASTERN AMERICA

On February 24/March 9 in Washington, at the St. John the Baptist Church there was held a pastoral conference, in which participated a small number of clergy, some 20 priests from the Eastern-American diocese. In the beginning it was supposed to be a confession week for the clergy, then talk was that it will be a diocesan meeting and finally, resolutions of a pastoral conference were published. It seems that the participants were skillfully selected so as to make sure that those who might raise “unpleasant” questions would not come. So, for example, Hieromonk Paisios (rector of Richmond Hill parish) who earlier bravely protested against the Epistle of the ROCOR Council of Bishops in 2000 was designated to serve every day in the Synod cathedral. The American participants (who spoke no Russian) complained that this time there were no simultaneous translations, which used to be provided at such meetings.

The main speakers were Archpriests Valery Lukianov, George Larin and the rector of Washington parish Victor Potapov.

The resolution of the Washington conference opens with the words: “Whereas, we the clergy of Eastern Diocese, meeting with the blessing of His Eminence, the Most Reverend Metropolitan Vitaly...” Yet, we have learned that Metropolitan Vitaly not only did not give a blessing for this meeting but also didn’t even know it would be held!

In the very first paragraph the conference “expresses our continued devotion, loyalty and obedience to our lawful and God-bearing hierarchy, and wish to provide support and assistance to them in the exercise of our common ministry that of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is also states “that we call on all our brother clergy to renew their efforts to be accountable both to one another and to our lawful hierarchy, to act in spirit of mutual humility and cooperation, and jointly... to demonstrate our commitment to our archpastors.”

It is interesting that in resolutions of both conferences the terms “lawful hierarchy” or “Sacred Church Authority” (Sviashchennonachalie), terminology invented by the Moscow Patriarchate, are repeated several times. We never heard such terms from the three departed First Hierarchs.

On March 2/15 a pastoral meeting of the Western-American diocese was held. It is noteworthy that it is not signed and from the text it is not evident that His Grace Bishop Kiril of Western-America and San Francisco participated in any manner, although the clergy expresses their loyalty to the Metropolitan Vitaly and their own bishop. The “Appeal” (one has to guess to whom) is signed by 19 priests and 4 deacons.

This “Appeal” is much longer than Washington’s 3 resolutions, and takes up 12 pages. The entire “Appeal” consists of an extended apologia for the Bishops Council of October 2000 and is very rich with quotations taken out of context from various Council decisions and citations of various speeches and writings of some hierarchs. Contrary to the obvious, it tries hard to prove that there has been absolutely no change made in the historical course of the ROCOR.

In the first part, about disturbances in the Church Abroad, the authors of the San Francisco Appeal say: “At the same time, it is with tears that we beg those of our co-pastors and faithful who do not accept the decisions of the Sobor of Bishops, those who are revolting against the hierarchy and bring into temptations the ‘little ones’, to turn to the path of true church life, obedience, love and trust. Because of the above mentioned perturbations and opposition to Higher Church Authority, we consider it necessary, at least briefly, to witness that no radical change in the course of the Church or departure from Her historical position took place at the Sobor of Bishops in the year 2000”. (Emphasis by “Ch.N.”)

Both conferences in no way mentioned that three hierarchs of the ROCOR withdrew their signatures from the letter to Serbian Ecumenist Patriarch Pavle and one of them openly refused to sign the Council’s Epistle.

Reacting to the Washington Conference in an Internet report, Peter Budzilovich wittily called his post “The art of speaking without saying anything at all”. After praising the appeals for remaining loyal to their bishops, Mr. Budzilovich asks: to whom? To those who withdrew their signatures under the letter to Serbian Patriarch, or to those who support Ecumenism and let their signatures stay?

Peter Budzilovich only failed to stress that both pastoral conferences clearly and unanimously said the very same thing: namely: you, the opposition, keep silent, do not criticize anything, do not suspect anything, blindly trust your bishops and unconditionally obey them!

A FORGETFUL ARCHPASTOR **By Fr. Michael Ardov**

The disturbance in the Church Abroad, which was caused by the scandalous decisions of the last Bishops' Council, continues. Clergymen upset by the treachery of the Highest Administration, are subject to suspensions and besides, some bishops addressed their flock with epistles, which we would term admonitions and warnings. In this genre we include the words of the First Hierarch Metropolitan Vitaly, Secretary of the Synod Archbishop Laurus as well as of Bishops Evtikhy and Agathangel.

The "Appeal to the Flock" by the last is of special interest to us, since it is directed against the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church and it, as our readers know, some few years ago was forced to separate from the Synod Abroad.

Vladyka Agathangel bases his point of view on precedents.

"...Sometimes in the history of the Church there were made unjust decisions concerning some of the righteous. An example of such is the conciliar condemnation of St. John Chrysostom, when he was unjustly excommunicated from the Church and died in exile. Or, also we know of the execution of Archbishop Arseny (Macievich), there are a number of such sad examples. But I want to stress that neither St. John Chrysostom, nor Arseny (Macievich), nor St. Gregory the Theologian (at times of persecution) never had a thought or wish to separate and create his own "Synod". They manfully submitted to all the suspensions and unjust condemnations, hoping for God's Judgment, but never separating from the Church. And the Church, in due time, gave every one of them a dignified and proper place. Therefore, in no way can I justify, or, even more, laud any kind of separation from the Church".

An Orthodox Bishop should know history better and in this context mention the name of St. John Chrysostom. It is a public knowledge that after 403, when the council of 36 bishops defrocked him, the great saint continued to preach from the ambo, and celebrate liturgy; in other words, he refused to recognize the validity of that council. The special ire of Bishop Agathangel in his Epistle was directed at the participants in the 8th conference of clergy, monastics and lay people of the Suzdal diocese.

'It got to the point that Suzdal Synod lost all sense of shame, forgetting about scandal, and 'calls upon the zealots of Orthodoxy' from the Russian clergy and lay people of the ROCOR 'to submit to the omophor of the ROAC (as they call themselves)".

Then in the "Appeal" of Bishop Agathangel there follows an extensive paragraph that states that "the Suzdalians" supposedly misinterpret Ukase #362 of Patriarch Tikhon and that this document, supposedly in no way may be used as a basis for separation of the Russian hierarchs from submission to the Synod Abroad.

Let us put aside the question of whether our Synod has lost "all shame" or if it "forgot about scandal". But, unfortunately, the incensed author of this "Appeal" does not remember certain facts and not only from the life of St. John Chrysostom, but also from his own biography. We have not forgotten that in 1994 the episcopal consecration of Bishop Agathangel was performed not in Jordanville, not in New York, but namely in Suzdal. And the Russian bishops, who at the moment are separated, consecrated him into the hierarchy of the Church Abroad.

Also, we have not forgotten the circumstances of Bishop Agathangel's visit to New York (February, 1995); at that point during the session of the Synod Abroad he and four other bishops were suspended from serving. This is because of what Bishop Agathangel himself wrote at that time (I quote from an official document which is preserved in the archives):

"The members of the Synod exceeded their authority, since the acceptance of such decisions is in the competence of the Council, decided by the way of canonical suspension to establish their single authority over whole Russia, the one abroad and historical one. The basic foundations of the Church Abroad, as a part of the Russian Church existing abroad were trampled upon and the Synod, without authorization, appropriated to itself the rights and powers of the Russian Local Church. It has not given a second thought to the fact that, in suspending five bishops at once, it deprives more than 150 parishes of archpastoral ministry, and this includes many thousands of Orthodox people".

I have before me another document: the Minutes # 3 of the Third Session of the Hierarchical Consultation of Russian Hierarchs of February 27/March 12 1995.

"H e a r d:

His Grace Agathangel, Bishop of Simferopol, who introduced an proposal to return to the Temporary Superior Church Administration of the Russian Church in concordance with the holy canons, testaments of the New Martyrs and Ukase # 362 of Saint Patriarch Tikhon."

This proposal was accepted, so it would be no exaggeration to state that the final separation of the Russian hierarchs from the Church Abroad happened because of the initiative of Bishop Agathangel. I believe no commentaries here are necessary....

Archpriest Michael Ardov
Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church

HOW SHOULD ONE UNDERSTAND?

We received an appeal or address (?) to "All concerned and faithful clergy, regarding the unfortunate state of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia" written in Russian and English on the letterhead of the "Russian Exarchate of the True Orthodox Church of Greece" signed by "Protopresbyter Victor Melehov", and dated Forgiveness Sunday, 2001. Archpriest Victor Melehov at one time was a clergyman of the ROCOR and the rector of a parish in the state of Massachusetts.

This address points out "Some within ROCOR have turned to Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal as a possible alternative. Although its desirability is readily recognizable, canonically, it would seem that the "Suzdal Solution" calls for clarity on one essential question. Did Archbishop Valentine employ Patriarch Tikhon's Ukase appropriately in establishing another church administration? Another area worthy of note is Archbishop Valentine's ability to possess Church property formerly under the control of the Moscow Patriarchate. To be sure, given the power and influence of the Moscow Patriarchate over the new Russian Government, this is no minor accomplishment. Archbishop Valentine's resourcefulness in securing so much property, especially in historic Suzdal, while simultaneously speaking out against the Moscow Patriarchate, presents itself at least as a curious phenomenon. Finally, it is not my intention to promote or discredit jurisdictions in this letter", explains Fr. Victor, who just finished a clever effort to discredit Archbishop Valentin! (emphasis by "Ch. N.")

By the way, the church property received by Metropolitan Valentin was never under any control of the Moscow Patriarchate. After the formal fall of the Communist regime he requested and received the churches (actually in most cases their ruins) in the very same manner as the Moscow Patriarchate. The church property had been under the management of the state museums and under their "protection" as historical monuments.

It is worth mentioning that the "historical phenomena" is not so much in personality of Metropolitan Valentin, whose 30 year long reputation for trustworthiness is extremely high among not only Suzdal's residents, but also in his dioceses and parishes, as is the letter of Fr. Melehov, who is a member of one of the numerous old-calendar Greek groups, all of whom (with slight variations in name) always have the name of the "True Orthodox Church of Greece".

Between the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (by now Metropolitan Valentin) and "The Holy Orthodox Church in North America" (Bishop Ephraim of Boston), under whose jurisdiction is the "Russian Exarchate of the True Orthodox Church of Greece" – there is a similarity in their historical origins.

Soon after Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory began to preside over the ROCOR, a clergyman of the Greek Archdiocese, Archimandrite Pantelemon, requested admission into the fold of the Russian Church Abroad. Fr. Pantelemon developed a wide missionary activity and the Church Abroad was enriched with a great number of Greek-American parishes and a very well established monastery and a convent. Metropolitan Philaret, as well as his right hand, Protopresbyter George Grabbe, rejoiced in the Holy Transfiguration monastery's activities and lovingly spoke about it as "our Greeks". This lasted for some 22 years, until the repose of Metropolitan Philaret. His death changed a lot. Almost immediately the new church administration of Metropolitan Vitaly started to persecute Transfiguration Monastery. As a result of whole number of crude canonical violations on the part of the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops toward Transfiguration Monastery, whose clergy were illegally defrocked by the Synod, "our Greeks" had to leave, at first being under a Greek old calendar bishop and by now providing their own Greco-American hierarchy.

The fate Russian Orthodox Church was similar, when by similarly violating canonical and procedural regulations (the ROCOR at one time suspended all five Russian Bishops and later "defrocked" Bishop Valentin of Suzdal, the most prominent opponent to the MP) forced some of them out. At the end, like "our Greeks" a part of the Russian episcopate had to separate itself from the ROCOR.

Here the similarities of the fates of both Churches end.

The Russian Hierarchs, being in their own Homeland and after the restoration of a canonical hierarchy by the ROCOR, continued their canonical existence based on the Patriarchal Ukase # 362 of November 7/20, 1920, and at present have 9 Hierarchs, 300 Catacomb parishes and communities and no less than 100 open parishes.

For some reason, the "True Orthodox Church of Greece" (unfortunately, in this case it happened to be also the Boston Hierarchy) found it possible to, in violation of the canon law which strictly guards the borders of any Local Church, to start her own activity on the territory of the Russian Autocephalous Church and now, the "Russian Exarch" not only unlawfully ministers to the Russian parishes within Russia's borders, but even has the courage to question the canonical legality of the native Russian bishops!

The matter of canonicity of this or that Russian hierarch is an internal problem of the Russian Church and no one, except her own members, have any right to interfere in discussions of these problems.

This inevitably raises a question: what does this letter/appeal to the clergy of ROCOR by Fr. Melehov mean? Is it his private, sadly a very unfortunate initiative, or he did receive for it a blessing from his hierarchy?

The Greek (Boston's) hierarchy has never shown tendencies to stir up problems and start intrigues within autonomous or autocephalous Churches, therefore one is rather inclined to believe that this unfortunate move was Fr. Melehov's personal initiative.

We have received a copy of a letter to Metropolitan Valentin, on the letterhead of "Russian Exarchate of the True Orthodox Church of Greece" written and signed by Protopresbyter Victor Melehov. Addressing him as "Dear Vladyka", Fr. Melehov graciously thanks the Metropolitan, "his parishioners and colleagues" for the composition of the church service to Metropolitan Philaret, soon to be canonized by the Greeks, and expresses his satisfaction that this prelate is venerated

also in Russia and signs his letter to the First Hierarch of the Autonomous Church of Russia in a very familiar manner "with love in Christ"!

REGARDING AN APPEAL OF A GROUP OF ST. PETERSBURG CLERGY TO BISHOP EVTIKHY

To the venerable Fathers: Archimandrite Alexis (Marino), Hieromonk Barsanouphy (Kapralov), Priest Paul Simakov and their flock.

More than 10 years ago we left the heretical Moscow Patriarchate and joined the ROCOR. But you needed several years to make up your mind to make this step, although you were aware of all the ecclesiastical events. Why?

Six years ago we identified the heretical position of Bishop Evtikhy (Kourochkin) and we severed liturgical and prayerful connections with him... Many of you were indignant, accusing us of disobedience to the ROCOR Synod of Bishops, naming our position as "Averianov-style" and even sectarianism. For the defense of our ecclesiastical truth some of us were subjected to persecutions, accusations, slander and suspensions. No, you yourself became convinced that we, lead by the Holy Spirit, were quite right. Why was it necessary for six troublesome years to pass?

By the summer of 1996 a group of clergy was forced temporarily to sever their liturgical and prayerful communion with the ROCOR, being grieved by the increasingly permeating processes of apostasy. We didn't completely leave the ROCOR and we also didn't join some Old Calendar Greeks of dubious canonical status, the "catacomb church". So, why are you still today marking time in one place by lulling yourselves with half measures? You commemorate some ROCOR bishops and refuse to commemorate others, as if not willing to see that the first as well as the second ones – comprise a unified liturgical and prayerful body. How much more time will you need, who drag yourselves by the tail of ecclesiastical events to reach the simple truth? We pity you and your flock!

May the Lord grant you true wisdom, resoluteness and consistency!

December 16/29, 2000 A group of Catacomb clergy of Moscow and St. Petersburg.

We have no idea who is the authors of this appeal to the St. Petersburg's clergy, but in no way can we deny that they are quite right!

A BISHOP OF THE RUSSIAN CHURCH BRUTALLY BEATEN

According to the Internet magazine Vertograd # 49 of March 26, 2001, two unknown young men, who skillfully manipulated police nightsticks, brutally beat up Bishop Ambrose of Habarovsk, at the entrance to a building where he had just served a Liturgy. Beaten up was also a Priest Dimitry who accompanied him.

Bishop Ambrose and his priest were both brought to the hospital. Bishop Ambrose for several hours was unconscious and put into the intensive care ward. His lip torn, his face and whole body black and blue, but, thank God, no vital organs were damaged. While beating up the bishop, criminals demanded that he immediately leave town. Bishop Ambrose and the priest have already left the hospital.

Metropolitan Valentin, in his letter of March 28th to the head of Habarovsk's regional administration insisted that the administration take exhaustive measures to secure the equal rights of religious organizations and also to charge the guilty ones with criminal acts.

Witnesses testified that the license number of the escape car was covered with dirt.

MEETING OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN (AUTONOMOUS) CHURCH

According the Internet Virtograd news # 40 of March 15th, on day of feast of the icon of Royal Holy Virgin, in the Synod's building in Suzdal there was a meeting of the Synod of Bishops, which was attended by: Valentin, Bishop of Suzdal and Vladimir, Theodore, of Borisovo and Sanino, Seraphim Archbishop of Abhasia, Ambrose, Bishop of Habarovsk and Anthony, Bishop of Yaransk.

Archbishop Valentin raised the question of the possibility of glorifying the third First Hierarch of the Church Abroad – Metropolitan Philaret. Archbishop Theodore reported that with the published agenda of the meeting, there was a request to the hierarchs to attend this meeting and to give a written opinion regarding this proposition. Archbishop Theodore himself said that he "believes that our Synod should fulfill God's will and to do now what the Synod of the Church Abroad is unable to do – glorify Metropolitan Philaret as a saint".

The absent Victor, Archbishop of Daugavpills and Latvia, Hilarion, Bishop of Smeliany and also Bishops Timothy and Geronty, supported this opinion. Regarding the glorification of Metropolitan Philaret, all the Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church unanimously resolved:

1. "Considering that the prelate Philaret (Voznesensky) was the helmsman of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and guided his Orthodox vessel across the worldly sea according to rules of the Orthodox Church, not compromising with the Sergianists and due to the veneration by the Russian Orthodox people of Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory, as well as his incorrupt remains revealed in Jordanville at the re-burying of his relics, TO GLORIFY Philaret (Voznesensky), Metropolitan of New York, the First Hierarch of the ROCOR in the Tsar Constantine Cathedral of the God-preserved city of Suzdal following Holy Pascha.
2. To establish a feast day of Prelate Philaret on day of his repose, November 8/21, on the feast of St. Michael the Archangel and all the Heavenly Powers".

Then Archbishop Valentin reported that recently the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Autonomous Church received several petitions on part of the clergy and lay people of ROCOR to be admitted under the omophorion of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. As reason for their exit, both the faithful and the clergy, state that the Hierarchs of the ROCOR have departed from the truth in the direction of rapprochement with the MP and other Ecumenists.

The participants expressed the opinion that the clergy might be received without canonical release, since they depart from their bishop by reason of rapprochement with Ecumenists. The basis for this is the 15th canon of the First and Second Constantinople Council "...withdrawing themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching heresy publicly, and teaching it bareheaded in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called bishop before any councilor or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honor which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers; and they have not surrendered the union of the Church with any schisms and divisions".

Among those accepted are two priests from the USA.

Addressing the second part of the agenda, Archbishop Theodore announced the proposal of their graces the bishops, which have been forwarded to the attention of the Synod of Bishops of the ROAC. In their reports the bishops propose to deliberate on the matter of further heading to the Russian Autonomous Church by a bishop of the rank of metropolitan. At the same time he proposes to elevate Archbishop Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir to the rank of METROPOLITAN. "My opinion is the following: The President of the ROAC for 10 years now has headed the Suzdal eparchy, and keeps the steering wheel of the church administration on the course which was bequeathed by the First Hierarchs of the Church Abroad and he deserves to be elevated to this high rank – the rank of Metropolitan and to be called the First Hierarch of the ROAC".

Hilarion, Bishop of Smeliani expressed a similar opinion: "From the moment of issuing the decisions of the last Council, the ROCOR ceased to exist as a true bearer of Orthodoxy with her sacred authorities and hierarchs, who indicated their willing rapprochement with the MP. Therefore the Russian Orthodox Church (Autonomous) immediately needs to have a First Hierarch – a Metropolitan in order to reestablish the sacred administration. I write this to you, as a clergyman of the Church, that the God's Providence from the beginning elected Vladyka Valentin as a tool for restoration in Russia of the true Orthodox Church of Christ and he suffered much for taking the step of fulfilling this providential act".

His Grace Bishop Ambrose added to that as the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church he is worthy to be a Metropolitan with the right to wear two panagias. And also the senior Bishops after the First Hierarch – Archbishops Theodore, Seraphim and Victor are worthy of the right to wear a cross on their klobuks.

The participants of the Synod of Bishops resolved:

1. Considering the proposals of the venerable Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, for the benefit of the God's Church, in the future to have a head of the Church in the rank of METROPOLITAN.
2. Considering the labors of Archbishop Valentin to the glory of the Lord's Church and considering the wishes of the Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, to ELEVATE TO THE RANK OF THE METROPOLITAN, with the rites to wear two panagias, His Eminence VALENTIN Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir.
3. To award their Eminences with the right to wear crosses on their klobuks

Metropolitan Valentin on several occasions flatly refused to be elevated to the rank of Metropolitan and on the Eighth Diocesan Assembly convened in November of last year, he petitioned the Assembly insisting they grant him retirement on account of his poor health. At that time the Assembly flatly refused his request. His many years of de facto holding the position of First Hierarch long ago called for his official elevation to the rank of Metropolitan.

Then the synod deliberated upon internal matters of the ROAC and at it also "echoed the opinion of His Grace Bishop Ambrose that the time is ripe to decide about the gracelessness of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Members of the Synod agreed with it and resolved: to begin to work on this problem, so as to study this matter in detail at the next Synod meetings and to acquire the responses from all the Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church".

Undoubtedly, after the treachery that was revealed at the October Council of Bishops of the ROCOR in the year 2000, now she has fully returned to her Homeland and settled in the ancient Russian capital – God-preserved Suzdal!

NEW "REVELATIONS" ABOUT BISHOP OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE, TIMOTHY (WARE)

Bishop Timothy Ware is widely known in Orthodox circles, (primarily among the English speaking converts) for his book "The Orthodox Church". Originally it was published in 1964 and since that time there have been a number of new editions. Yet, with every new reprint it became more and more ecumenist, so that after just a few years, this book could be recommended to people interested in Orthodoxy, only with severe reservations and explanations.

Just recently, a newspaper "The Christian News" reported that in 1996 there was published a book entitled "How Are We Saved?" In the section "The Orthodox Position on Genesis 1-2" there is an article by Bishop Timothy Ware about the creation of the universe as per first book of the Bible – Genesis. The Protestant conservative newspaper quite justly points out in the 88-page article by Ware "some erroneous and heretical views on Genesis and creation."

The newspaper quotes the heretical views of Timothy Ware and at the same time publishes genuine Orthodox Holy Fathers traditions, written by a Greek Mike Christopoulos.

Ware writes: "When dealing, for example, with Genesis 2-3, we may leave open the question how far this is to be interpreted as history and how far as myth (of course myths may be true, but the truth is valid on a level different from that of literal history). Even if many Orthodox Christians continue to regard Genesis 2-3 as literal history, the Orthodox Church as such is not committed to this position".

Then Timothy Ware asks: "Is the Genesis account the story of two individuals called Adam and Eve, or is it rather expressing something that is part of the story of each one of us?"

It is interesting to note that one finds out about such an outrageous article by an Orthodox Bishop accidentally from a Protestant religious newspaper, while the Ecumenical Patriarchate has kept quiet about it for a full 4 years!

There was a time, at the beginning of the 1960's, when Ware (at that time a lay person) was a parishioner of the Synod's cathedral in New York and spiritual son of Archbishop George Grabbe!

CHURCH DEDICATED TO ROYALTY AND PRESIDENT

According to SMT-News of February 13th, in the village of Krasnyi Sad (Beautiful Garden) in region of Rostov, a church is being built in a former sovhoz. The rector, Priest Vladimir Pankovets "a former investigator regarding specially important matters" is (most probably, a former KGB agent).

According to this priest, on the church wall will be written "established in 2000 of Christ's Nativity in honor of Sainly Royal Passion Bearers and in memory of the election to the Russian presidency of Vladimir Putin'. The church is to be similar to Holy Trinity church in Troitsky Sergiev Lavra or St. Dimity in Vladimir.

Priest Pankevets openly admits that the President will become an honorary churchwarden and therefore will help in building it. He believes that "this is an honor granted by God", and one cannot refuse it.

There is no limit to obsequiousness in the Moscow Patriarchate!

ECUMENIST ACTIVITIES OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

Under the pressure from the simple faithful, the Moscow Patriarchate was forced to limit to the minimum her ecumenical activities within Russia itself, but she does not shy away from participating in various actions abroad, from whence information arrives rather late and is available mostly to a few Russian reporters and therefore it is very seldom that it reaches a wide circle of Christians.

So it happened that the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" ("Russian Herald") # 5-6, 2001, reported on last year's October gathering in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The Argentina newspaper that published information about this prayer meeting called it "an unprecedented ecumenical prayer." According to Argentina's newspaper "La Nacion" the prayer gathering "consisted of acts of praise, prayers for forgiveness, commemoration of confessors of faith in the 20th century and appeals for unity". In these prayers participated: Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Armenians, Lutheran Evangelicals, Presbyterians and "Orthodox" Churches: the Antiochian, Ecumenical and Moscow Patriarchies.

Just 10 days later there was another extended ecumenical prayer gathering, which included also non-Christians. In it participated Hindus, Jews, Muslims and the same "Orthodox" as in previous assembly. As the same newspaper reported "The Orthodox Archbishop Platon (MP) prayed to the Lord 'to serve Thee in sanctity through out our lives'; a Hindu swami prayed "for the river to peacefully flow. Let it be quiet in all directions"; Muslim Imam Ibrahim al Alfi praised the Lord in Arabic language and prayed: 'show us the right way and not the way of those who lost their way'; Rabbi Abraham Skorka asked for 'gifts of mutual understanding and wisdom'!

THE BIBLE AND CONTEMPORARY ATTITUDES

The newspaper of the Serbian Church in America, "Path of Orthodoxy" for of February published an article about the Holy Bible. According to the newspaper, 92% of American households have the Bible and it is believed that 2/3's of them have even three copies of the Holy Scripture. According to American tradition, the Holy Bible is considered to be a constant "best seller" yet despite this the Holy Scripture is the least known book to American Christians (and American only?)

According to one of the Gallop surveys we know that at least one half of Americans do not know the name of the Bible's first book -Genesis. Only one third new who gave the Sermon on the Mount (many thought it was Billy Graham) and one fourth didn't know what is celebrated on Easter.

And yet, 20 million Bibles are sold annually (not counting 10 million which are given away for free), but only 15% participate in the groups that study Holy Scriptures. This survey also showed that of the 79% of those that read the Bible in 1980, by now has lowered to 59%. As George Gallop said: "We revere the Bible, but we don't read it."

It is now considered that the translation of the Bible made under King James is not understood by contemporary English speaking Christians, but the latest "translation" of the Holy Bible (New International Version) is written at the seventh-grade reading level!

A bulletin "The Ecumenical News International" of March 14th reported that there was just published in England the "translation" of the New Testament written in London "cockney" slang and it was approved by the Canterbury Archbishop Carey. As an example of this "translation", the bulletin quoted the Lord's Prayer, sounding so blasphemous that we consider it impossible to quote it in the pages of our "Church News."

The end result of these actions was that after the 1960's, the Holy Bible not only was not properly translated, but also in fact, very cleverly falsified. Starting with that period, the number of Bible "translations" can be compared only with the number of new cookbooks. At the same time, over the last few years, we notice a steady effort to undermine the authority of Holy Scripture.

Such renowned magazines as "Time," "U.S. News & World Report" or "Newsweek" periodically publish articles by some scientists and professors, who put such questions as: who was Christ? Was Christ a historical personality? Where was He born? Should one believe in His resurrection? And many similar blasphemies. Such themes are discussed at "scientific" seminars in universities and even in the government buildings. Not to look too far for an example, "U.S. News & World Report" of March 19th reported that on April 6th there was scheduled a blasphemous court hearing on the subject: is it possible to verify Christ's resurrection? The defense of Christian principles is to be defended by fundamentalist Protestant Pat Robertson. His opponent will be a Jewish lawyer.

The very same magazine published an article that crudely undermines the basic facts of Holy Scripture and Tradition. King David is depicted as a minor chieftain of a insignificant tribe who committed sins of adultery and murder. Earlier "scientists" considered King David to be a mythical personality, but now they believe he indeed existed. Yet, "details about the life and rule of King David are in question". Then they write, "David was hardly the flawed-but-noble hero depicted in the Scriptures." He was more likely a ruthless, homicidal scoundrel whose legend was later embellished and sanitized to give a demoralized people a much needed folk hero". Similar opinions are held by the godless slaves to contemporary "science" about King Solomon. This article rejects the Holy Tradition that the Bible was written by the Prophet Moses, rather during rule of King David!

According to the official publication of the Serbian Patriarchate "Pravoslavlje" of March 1st, parts of Holy Bible are translated into 2, 261 languages and last year there were added another 29 languages. This makes the Bible to be the most widely translated book in the world. A translation of the complete Bible is done in 383 languages, and the New Testament alone is made in 987 languages. There are plans to translate the Bible into 672 more languages!

CATHOLIC PRIESTS RAPE THEIR NUNS AND CHILDREN

A newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of March 16th devoted 2 full pages to information that Catholic priests in Africa not only molest their nuns but also in many cases rape them.

A nun Maria McDonald from the order of Missionaries of Our Lady of Africa and the President of the council of 16 representatives of various Catholic monastic orders (who meet three times a year) declared that she would report to the Vatican about the problem of "sexual abuses in Africa".

In year 2000, the nun Esther Fangman made a report about it to the 250 Priors of Benedictine monasteries; in 1995 Cardinal Eduardo Martinez also forwarded a report to the Vatican regarding this issue. In 1994, nun Maura O'Donohue, a professional physician, made a very detailed report to the Vatican and pointed out that Catholic priests prefer to have illegal relations with their nuns, being afraid of chance to be infected with AIDS rather than deal with prostitutes. There were known cases when priests demanded that their pregnant nuns commit abortions. All of this and multitude of similar reports fell on deaf ears in the Vatican.

The very same newspaper, but of March 30th reported that as it seems that due to publicity generated by their reporters, the Vatican was forced to react.

On March 20th, 2001 a spokesman for the Vatican, Navarro-Valls said that for 5 years the Vatican has been aware of amorality on part of its clergy in connection with AIDS epidemics in Africa and made the following formal declaration: "The problem is known, and is restricted to a geographically limited area. The Holy See is dealing with the question in collaboration with the bishops, with the Union of Superiors General and with the International Union of Superiors General. The work has two sides, the formation of persons and the solution of single cases. Certain negative situations cannot cause to be forgotten the frequently heroic fidelity of the great majority of male religious, female religious and priests". In any case, there is no doubt that the Vatican was in no way shocked by this information!

At the same time, a Lutheran newspaper "Christian News" of March 19th reports that the Roman Catholic "church" in Africa, as well as in Canada is on the border of bankruptcy, because the victims (teenagers, male and female) molested by their priests, started to file suit in court and demand money for their crippled lives. Usually, the Catholic dioceses, trying to avoid scandalous publicity manage to settle the cases out of courts. But these dioceses in the USA alone have already paid out more than a billion dollars. In some cases, the Catholic bishops are also threatened by possible court litigations for covering up their criminal clergy. They simply transfer such priests to another parish. Evidently, the same immorality troubles the Anglican and other clergies.