

NEWSLETTER #8

Department of Foreign Relations Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

February 1977

LETTER OF METROPOLITAN SERAPHIM OF KRUTSITSY AND KOLOMNA.

A private Swiss information center "Faith in the Second World" which specializes in news of church life in the USSR, unexpectedly received some pretranslated circular letters written by Metropolitan Seraphim, the ruling Bishop of the Moscow Diocese. The documents were smuggled by one of the "Fathers Provosts".

According to the news received, Metropolitan Seraphim summoned all the "Fathers Provosts" of the diocese and gave them his orders verbally. At the same time all the priests of the diocese received a document which they were to sign.

According to the circular, priests of the Moscow diocese are forbidden to preach in any parish other than their own, unless they have the personal permission of Metropolitan Seraphim. Also no religious services are to be held in private homes and the priests are warned not to "mix in political, social or economic questions, or even in the financial affairs of their own parish". He also points out that he is aware that "the Rite of Anointing has been administered not only to the sick, but also to the aged, a practice which is illegal both by Church and State law". If at any time this order is violated, the priests involved are to be personally reported to the Metropolitan by the "Fathers Provosts". The "violators" are threatened with defrocking.

METROPOLITAN BARTHOLOMAIOS INTERVIEWED.

The "National Catholic Reporter" sent a correspondant to Istanbul, Turkey, in order to obtain an interview with Metropolitan Bartholomaios, Secretary to the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios. He was primarily interested in questions concerning the preparations for the coming Ecumenical Council.

The 36 year old Metropolitan, who graduated from the Jesuit Oriental Institute in Rome where he studied Canon Law, informed the reporter that "our aims are like John's, to update the Church and promote Christian Unity. Announcement of the coming Pan Orthodox Council has aroused high hopes". He briefly mentioned that the faithful must adjust to contemporary circumstances and that, for example, the 40 day Lenten period before Christmas is hardly ever observed, and then in monasteries only. Metropolitan Bartholomaios pointed out that now the Council "will review all our bilateral talks with Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Old Catholics, and the non-Chalcedonian Church." (Which is now the polite way of referring to the Monophysite heresy.) "The Council will also signify the opening of the Orthodox Church to non-Christian religions, to humanity as a whole. This means a new attitude toward Islam, toward Buddahism, toward contemporary culture, toward aspirations for a fraternal society free from racial discrimination.....In other words, it will mark the end of 12 centuries of isolation of the Orthodox Church."

When asked if there will be non-Orthodox observers present at the Ecumenical Council meetings, the Metropolitan answered that "No decision has been taken, but I think there will be--the Vatican Council experience provides a very positive precedent."

REGARDING BULGARIAN BISHOP KYRILL.

The Russian language newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" of Jan. 27th, 1977 informed its readers that Metropolitan Ireney (of Metropolia) accepted in his Church, Bishop Kyrill, who was ordained while under the jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, at its two meetings, discussed Bishop Kyrill's position. Bishop Kyrill, of his own volition, accepted the new calendar and, when questioned about this as well as about other matters, never gave a satisfactory explanation which could be accepted either by the Council of Bishops or the Synod of Bishops.

After hearing the case, the Council of Bishops, in their session of the 23rd of September/6th of October, 1976, resolved to sever communion with the Bulgarian Bishop Kyrill, and to expell him from the constituency of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, because of his constant disobedience to the decisions of the Council and Synod of Bishops".

FR. DIMITRI DUDKO ANSWERS CORRESPONDANT'S QUESTIONS.

A Foreign Correspondant recently mailed Fr. Dimitri Dudko a number of pertinent questions, requesting a reply. The Russian Language Paris newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" published this very valuable statement of a priest who became famous because of his bravery.

When asked if he knew how many churches were closed during the past year and how many were built, Fr. Dimitri answered: "It is difficult to say. I think that there were only closings. So far the opening of a church is as great a miracle as the resurrection of the dead. In the new cities no churches are built....."

In answer to other questions asked by the correspondant he replied that there is a severe shortage of Bibles and Prayer Books. "It is said that soon 50,000 copies of a Bible will be published. I am afraid that it will sit in the storage rooms or will be embezzled by some "kind" people. It should be quite normal for one to buy a Bible on the free market, but so far this has not happened."

Answering the last of the Correspondant's questions: "What is your status right now?", the heroic pastor declared: "For the time being I am attached to a parish, but I do not know for how long. Yet, no matter for how long, I have to do my best. In this I can be helped by the prayers of the faithful and your publicity. When a criminal is dragged into the light, he starts to be fearful of at least something."

ATTACK ON FR. ARCHIMANDRITE JUSTIN POPOVIC.

As per news received from Belgrade, the Communist government has strengthened its pressure on the Church. There are known cases of especially active pastors having been arrested. The newspaper "Vecerni Novosti" made a personal attack on the widely-known Doctor of Theology, Archimandrite Justin Popovic. In spite of his advanced age and incarceration in a monastery, Fr. Justin not only commands great respect and authority, but also keeps active with his scientific work. Just a short while ago he enriched the treasure chest of Orthodoxy by publishing 12 volumes of a fundamental work: The Lives of the Saints. While substantially adding to the basic work of St. Demetrius of Rostoff with the lives of the newly-canonized saints of the Russian Church, Fr. Justin used all available sources to include his own native Serbian saints, so dear to his heart. He also included the new martyrology of Greek saints who suffered for the faith under the Turkish yoke. At present he alters and adds more material to his other fundamental work on Dogmatic Theology.

POPE FORBIDS ORDINATION OF WOMEN.

"The National Catholic Reporter" informs us that Archbishop Bernardin, head of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged the Vatican to publish a document clearly forbidding the ordination of women to the priesthood. The demands of several groups defending women's rights and seeking to have a female priesthood in the same manner as the Episcopalians, has alarmed many Catholic Bishops in America. Because of this, the document which had been prepared in final text since last October, was hastily published by the Vatican just a short time ago. As expected, this document met with very sharp criticism from the defenders of women's rights. A demonstration was organized in New York City, where some 80 women, including 4 nuns, walked with posters in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Sister Cathlin Keating, head of the National Assembly of Women Religious, declared that: "This can only have a negative effect on women." The Women's Ordination Conference, which has some 900 members, suggested more studies on the subject should be made, and offered to organize prayer-vigil demonstrations as a protest against the Pope's decision. Sister Elizabeth Carroll, an activist, said that "This is not an infallible statement, it is not an encyclical.....It will be presented as the end of the road, but it is not the end of the road."

Several feminist organizations demanded that collections for the churches and seminaries should instead be diverted to promote the feminist cause.

JEWISH SERVICE HELD IN EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Some 100 persons attended a religious service in the Episcopal Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The Hannukah service was led by Rabbi Wolf Kellman, who lit the candles on the Menorah, while singing traditional Jewish hymns.

NEW MOVEMENT AMONG EPISCOPALIANS.

The Episcopal magazine "Living Church", in its issue of Jan. 2nd, 1977 informs us that on Dec. 2nd, 1976 in Chicago, the Coalition for the Apostolic Ministry held an open meeting. In attendance were some 250 faithful, including 16 Bishops. One of the very first resolutions adopted by the Coalition was a strongly-worded refusal to recognize women's ordinations and the questionable possibility of communion with this new ministry.

It was the general wish that the Bishops should influence various committies in order to raise the religious level of the faithful and to set up forces to deal with theology, liturgy, education, finances, by-laws, and litigations.

Bishop Robert Terwilliger announced that the Chicago group should be considered as the beginning of a new religious movement.

POLYGAMY PERMITTED.

The Anglican Church in Central Africa, in its 8th Provincial Synod, resolved that "A non-Christian man with more than one wife may, with permission of the Bishop, be received into the Church with his believing wife and children, and in due course be Confirmed and receive Communion, provided that the local community gives its willing consent..."

CRIMINAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF PATRIARCH NICHOLAS VI OF ALEXANDRIA.

As per the Serbian newspaper "Iskra" which is published in Germany, the Patriarch of Alexandria Nicholas VI spent several months in the Soviet Union during the Summer of 1976. It became known from the Odessa broadcast of July 4th, 1976, that, during his stay there, the Patriarch said to the Russian people: "We are very well informed about the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and we can witness against statements that have been made regarding the lack of freedom of conscience and religion. Here there are no violations of human and religious rights." he said. The Patriarch also said that "His Church greets and supports the struggle of the Soviet Union and its government for the defense of international concord." It is amazing that the Patriarch could be so taken in by the propaganda of the Moscow Patriarchate, that he acts as if he never knew about the millions of Christians that have been martyred for their faith by their atheistic government. The listeners to this broadcast could only take the Patriarch's words as a mockery of their sufferings or as a criminal unwillingness to believe that which even the Western world has started to protest...

OBSERVATIONS OF A HETERDOX.

The official publication of the Antiochian Exarchate in America, "The Word", has published in its Feb. 1977 edition, the observations of an Episcopal priest, Rev. M. Bourdeaux, made about the East. Rev. Bourdeaux is the head of an information agency "Keston College" in England. He has written several books mainly dedicated to the situation of the Church in Communist countries, especially in the USSR.

The Director of Keston College noted that "The fat Christianity of the West might be less long-lasting than the lean Christianity, the suffering Christianity of the East." We have already witnessed, although the world hasn't really learned about it yet, a major miracle -- the resurrection of the Faith in a situation of total suffering, in the Soviet Union"....."The Christian Faith was to all intents and purposes eradicated, as a visible organization at any rate....say by 1941 in the Soviet Union, and we now, in the 30 years that have passed, have seen a rebirth of that Christian faith."

While predicting that the time will come when American Christianity will need the Russian Christianity to be injected into it in order to survive at all, Rev. Bourdeaux makes a very thoughtful observation. "One cannot simply go out and become a Russian Christian....one has to be spiritually aware of what the message of the Russian Christian is, and here is something for which we have not even begun to prepare ourselves."

CATHOLIC WOMEN DO NOT GIVE UP.

The editorial in the "National Catholic Reporter" of March 4th, 1977 presents a short review of a recently published article by Archbishop Bernadin, which appeared in the Vatican newspaper "L'Osservatore Romano". "The National Catholic Reporter" feels that the meaning of the Archbishop's article is expressed by the idea that, since women cannot become priests, let us see what there is for them to do. Catholics know of the role played by Archbishop Bernadin in the urgent publication of the Vatican's decree which closed the doors to the priesthood to women. The Paper believes that Bernadin understands very well the meaning and weight of the movement for women's ordination, even if the Vatican underestimates it. He knows, as the editors think, that everything that cannot be fitted into the American tradition of independence will be ignored, just as was done in the very last Vatican's rule on morality.

"The Curia," say the editors at the end, "may feel that it has 2,000 years of experience on its side, but the Curia hasn't experienced the Women's Movement yet. The women will outlast the Pope's men on this one."

On the 18th and 19th of February 1977, in Cleveland, Ohio, there took place a meeting sponsored by the Cleveland Women's Ordination Task Force, as a result of the reaction to the Vatican's declaration forbidding admission of women to the priesthood. The majority of the members present were women, but many men also participated, 22 of whom were Catholic priests. Many members of this assembly called the declaration "bad theology". Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller, Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, informed the meeting that in the year 1062 the Vatican insisted that the Mass continue to be celebrated in Latin, and yet, in 1964 the Vatican Council decided that Mass could be celebrated in the vernacular. He pointed out that although the Vatican has refused to ordain women, it still didn't say "never" and this keeps the door open for future discussions, and possibly the not too distant future. Many members felt that the Decree could still be changed, since it was not made as an infallible declaration.

Unlike the former militant meetings of this sort, the Cleveland meeting was very calm, and it was decided that they will deal with this issue calmly, peacefully and carefully, trying to find enough documentation to be able to prove their point by biblical and theological data, that the priesthood was not meant for men only.

DANGER OF SPLIT AMONG ANGLICANS.

Any transgression of the Church's age-old tradition inevitably results, to a greater or lesser degree, in protest from the faithful. The preparation of the Anglicans over many years, for the acceptance of women priests, has finally culminated in a victory for the Womens' Liberation Movement. A Convention of Clergy and lay-people voted by a great majority for the right of women to be ordained. Yet today, less than a year since this decision was made, a protest movement has already begun among the Episcopalians. The Bishops had scarcely left the Convention when they began to issue statements to the effect that even if they had agreed to women's ordination in principle, would never permit this in their own dioceses. Also several parishes announced that they would refuse to accept a woman appointed as their rector. The ordination of a woman who admitted to being a homosexual (something she does not even consider to be a sin) served to make the split even deeper. The Right Rev. Paul J. Moore, when asked about this ordination by an ABC TV reporter, admitted that women's ordinations will bring "a lot of unrest, even the possibility of a small schism" to his church, but he still believes that this will strengthen it, as a final result. Asked about the Lesbian Ellen Barrett, he said that if he had to repeat this act he would not hesitate to do so, because her vocation is "deep" and "sincere" and her personal life is free of scandal.

Bishop Moore had to admit that he had received "an enormous amount of mail" and that "the negatives are a lot more than the positives". As the Anglican magazine "The Living Church" reported on March 13th, 1977, there are more and more parishes who have decided to withhold their diocesan assessments.

A group of Bishops and Clergy who assembled in Chicago last year in order to start a protest movement, met with an even larger membership in Dallas, Texas. The new organization, temporarily called the Evangelical and Catholic Mission, is led by several Bishops who do not accept women's ordinations. It intends to be a vital witness to the Church and plans to "revive" the tradition of an exclusively male clergy. The group intends to devote special attention to recalling the Anglican Church "which has strayed -- to deep commitment to holiness and truth." The Rt. Rev. Donald Davies, Bishop of Dallas, said that "the group will be a vital witness in the life of the Church. We hope the movement will have far-reaching consequences to the faith and order of the Church."

TRADITIONALISTS SEIZE CHURCH IN PARIS, FRANCE.

Fr. Louis Coache, a Catholic Priest, and his one thousand followers, seized St. Nicholas Church in the Latin Quarter of Paris. After celebrating the traditional Tridentine Mass, the Priest announced that, if the authorities should try to evict them, "we shall occupy Notre Dame".. Fr. Coache is a member of Archbishop Lefebvre's group, who, as is well known, has refused to accept the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the new "Mass", and has been fighting for the restoration of the Tridentine Mass in Latin.

MARRIAGE OF TWO WOMEN.

Two women were married to each other in Las Vegas, Nevada. A deputy marriage clerk and the Chaplain of the Chapel of Roses Wedding Chapel said that they were not aware that A. T. Callaghan was a woman, when she posed as a bridegroom. Mrs. Callaghan, who was married before, wore a man's suit and a tie. One of the chapel's staff members said that "she looked more like a man than a lot of men I have seen". When some observers suggested that the wedding might be illegal because of the fraudulent license, the Chaplain, Rev. Al Alaluf, said: "We have a license and that makes it a legal wedding. As far as I am concerned, one is dressed like a man and looks like a man." The "wedding" is considered to be the very first legal marriage of two homosexuals.