



CHURCH NEWS

AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION
OF ORTHODOX CHURCH THOUGHT

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1988

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MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

The editors wish all their readers a very Happy
Christmas and health and prosperity in the
New Year.

THE PRIMATE OF THE CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA TRAVELS ABROAD

In October the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia left the United States to visit the Holy Land and Europe. Metropolitan Vitaly was in Jerusalem for the centennial celebration of the erection of the St. Mary of Magdalene church in Gethsemane. Unfortunately the celebrations were clouded by the sudden death of the Abbess of the Gethsemane Convent, Theodosia. For the first time in the last 20 years such an important celebration was not attended by representatives of the Jerusalem Patriarch.

ILLNESS OF BISHOP GREGORY

In mid November Bishop Gregory underwent a successful operation for intestinal cancer and after a 10 day stay in the hospital returned home. The post-operative prognosis is excellent and the doctors do not expect any further complications.

THE FEAST OF THE SYNOD CATHEDRAL

On Saturday, Nov. 27/Dec. 10 the Synod cathedral, dedicated to the Miraculous icon of the Holy Virgin of Kursk, celebrated its annual feast. His Grace Bishop Hilarion officiated in concelebration with 14 priests, 3 protodeacons and one deacon with numerous readers and servers. The Synod choir under the direction of A.B. Ledkovsky, supplemented by young people from neighboring parishes, sounded very well. During the reading of the hours, V. Dutikow, elder of the Flushing church and a man from Teheran, were tonsured readers and then ordained subdeacons. During the small Entrance, Vladyka bestowed epigonations on the rector of the Vineland, N.J. parish, Fr. Liubo Miloshevich and priest-monk Patrick. A skufia was given to the rector of the New Brunswick, N.Y. parish, Fr. Serge Klestov. The cathedral was full despite the fact that no notice of the service was given in the Russian language paper. After a short moleben a trapeza was offered to all present.

A CATHOLIC THREAT TO ORTHODOXY IN RUSSIA

The New York Times of December 14, 1988, reported that the Moscow Patriarchate and the Vatican made an agreement according to which the Catholics will send Bibles to the USSR and, unfortunately, will also take part in reconstruction of the Russian Orthodox ecclesiastical schools according to their heretical manner.

The Vatican, which has dreamed for all these centuries of the conversion of Russia to Roman Catholicism, established relations with the Moscow Patriarchate as early as 1962. A frequent visitor of the Vatican was Metropolitan Nikodem (Rotov) who died there (it is believed as a secret Catholic).

On November 24th Archbishop Alexander of Dmitrovsk, the President of the Committee for the reconstruction of the academic program in the seminaries, visited the Vatican. He made an agreement with the Catholics that they will "assist" the Orthodox Church in Russia in performing a total reconstruction of the theological education of future clerics. The Vatican spokesman joyfully announced that "They have new possibilities now and they want to be informed about what we are doing because there are many things they have no experience with".

The Pope's delegation of 10 cardinals and several bishops, who attended the millennium celebrations in Moscow, strengthened ties between the Vatican and the Moscow Patriarchate. Only a few days after Archbishop Alexander's departure from the Vatican, Archbishop Pitirim of Volokolomsk, who is in charge of all Moscow Patriarchate ecclesiastical publications, arrived. He is seriously considered a possible successor to the old and ailing Patriarch Pimen. Archbishop Pitirim made an agreement with the Vatican

involving receiving supplies of their editions of Bibles.

Due to political considerations, the Moscow Patriarchate, shows a strong displeasure toward the Uniates, but for the same political benefits is willing to support the Roman Catholic interests in the USSR.

One does not have to be a prophet to know that the invitation of the heretic Catholics to assist in the total reconstruction of all ecclesiastical education programs, will lead to unobstructed propaganda of Catholicism in Russia, and that on the invitation of the Moscow Patriarchate.

THE RELEASE OF FR. VLADIMIR RUSAK

On October 24, 1988 Fr. Vladimir Rusak arrived in Moscow. He was released from a concentration camp due to pressure from western politicians. A few days after his release, Fr. Rusak gave a telephone interview, which was published in the November issue (#312) of the Keston News.

When asked about his present status with the communist authorities, Fr. Rusak said that in spite of his release he is still considered a criminal and remains under restrictions of article #70 of the Criminal Law. He can not get a permit to stay in Moscow even though his wife lives there. The authorities have ordered him to leave for Belorussia (his birthplace) within 3 days, but so far he has stayed under the pretext of unfinished business and has not experienced undo pressure to comply with the orders.

Fr. Rusak was asked if he has seen any changes in Church life during the 10 years since he wrote his book. He replied that he does not think that he was able to write a book, more precisely complete it. Due to circumstances the book had to be published in an unfinished form. "I must stress that I stand by all the assertions it contains on purely church matters because these are not my words or deliberation, but are based on incontrovertible documents and sources. However, there are chapters, which need a great deal of revision and agumentation. Sadly, there was nobody with whom I could consult, with whom to discuss or even debate the material, this was a great disadvantage".

He was then asked about his feelings toward the glorification of the new martyrs, since during the Council in Moscow, Metropolitan Anthony of Surozh and the Archbishop of Canterbury discussed it and Metropolitan Youvenaly briefly mentioned this theme in his speech in the Bolshoi Theatre. Fr. Rusak replied: "I am convinced that this is a vital step which the Russian Orthodox Church must take. Indeed, I would say that this must be the primary aim of the Moscow Patriarchate, taking precedence over the resolution of any problems. It is inexcusable to delay any longer.....The glorification of the new martyrs is a matter of conscience for the Church and the sooner it is done, the better".

Fr. Rusak expressed his wish to emigrate to Switzerland and the Synod of Bishops is doing whatever possible to obtain a visa for him and his family. Unfortunately, he revealed in a subsequent interview that he can no longer be considered a clergyman, because of his second marriage.

RETURN OF OPTINA PUSTYN

During the millenium celebrations of the Baptism of Russia, the Soviet government widely propagated its good deeds toward the Russian Church by returning to it a tiny portion of confiscated and badly plundered ecclesiastical property. An act widely publicized abroad, was the return to the Church of the famous Optina Pustyn (Hermitage). It was treated by many Russian people abroad as an especially joyful event. Unfortunately,

the reality was far from joyfull.

In its #311 issue, the Keston News stated, that despite hopes that Optina Pustyn will be restored by the beginning of 1988, little has been achieved in the restoration work on the still existing buildings, the majority of which had been destroyed by the godless. A school for technical-crafts students is on the territory of the "returned" monastery. The former monastic cells are occupied by 20 families who refuse to move out until the government finds them more suitable dwellings. Theodore Riabov, the state representative for religious affairs, who has held this position for 43 years, creates all sorts of difficulties and refuses to explain what happens to the monastery's "lost" mail. He is building himself a dacha close to the monastery and during this period 60,000 bricks belonging to the Church, have mysteriously disappeared. The foreman will not give workers cement for building. Meanwhile, the Church has hired workers and is paying them of 700 to 900 rubles per month. So far the Church has paid out 300,000 rubles and no visible results can be recorded. At the same time the KGB is building a two story house at the entrance to the monastery. The difficulties for the tiny monastic community which has settled in Optina do not end here: the bridge, which is essential for reaching the monastery is in poor condition. The faithful fear that this will be justification for authorities no to let them come to the monastery.

EFFORTS TO REPLACE THE CHURCH SLAVONIC LANGUAGE WITH RUSSIAN

The Ecumenical Press Service of November 20, 1988, published excerpts of a report by Mr. Peacock, an exchange student to the Theological Ecclesiastical Academy in Leningrad, who took part in an international church study conference. One of the main topics of the conference was the "controversial" question of reform of church language, namely the Church Slavonic. In some corcles it is believed the the Baptists have substantial success because the Russian language is understood by everyone, while the Church Slavonic has become absolute and many understand very little of it if at all. Yet, the majority of the faithful are strongly attached to slavonic and defend its use as a language which is superior to Russian and in all its forms and nuances more capable of expressing a fine theological concept. One of the speakers at this conference was Archimandrite Raphael, a representative of the Georgian Orthodox Church, who fervently defended the church slavonic language as being free from any traces of analysis and rationalism.

The main champion of the abolition of church slavonic is Archbishop Cyril of Smolensk, who as rector of the Ecclesiastical Academy introduced into the Liturgy reading of the Gospel and Epistles in Russian. This reform was immediately discontinued when he was removed from this position. Addressing the conference, Archbishop Cyril pleaded with the audience to understand that "the liturgical language currently used in our church is a hinderance to the assimilation by modern people of the richness and beauty of Orthodox worship, because the Church Slavonic language has lost the comprehensibility it once possessed not only for ordinary people, but also for the intelligenzia".

Another speaker at this conference was the representative of the "Orthodox Church in America", V. Rev. John Meyendorf, who defended the need for reform. However, Fr. Meyendorf also urged not to forget the historical lesson of Patriarch Nikon's reforms, which resulted in a schism and warned that such a reform can be successful only if it is based on mutual trust and willingness of the faithful and reformers to accept them. "The faith of the Church is preserved not only by apostolic succession, but by the whole people of God", declared Rev. Meyendorf. He also mentioned the reforms made by the Roman Catholic Vatican 2 Council and pointed out that they were forced "from above" and resulted in a "dangerous secularization of church life in the West and created a sort of western "oldbelievers" who until today vigorously oppose the forcible annihilation of Latin in their liturgical services.

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

The Ecumenical Patriarch initiated a conference, which took place in Rhodes (Greece) between October 30th and November 7th 1988, in which 70 Orthodox participants discussed the question of "The place of Women in the Orthodox Church and the question of ordination of women".

The Ecumenical Patriarch announced that this conference was arranged in order to "theologically base the impossibility of ordaining women in the Orthodox Church". Participants of the conference heard 14 lectures on the above theme, presented by representatives of the Serbian, Rumanian, Greek and the Moscow Patriarchate Russian Church. Lectures were also given by the representatives of the "Orthodox Church in America" and the Theological Institute of Paris, represented by Rev. A. Kniazeff.

The official publication of the Greek Archdiocese in America the "Orthodox Observer", of November 23rd, reports that the conference made a number of suggestions for the future gathering of the 4th pre-councilar meeting, which is to take place in February of 1989 at Chambessy (Switzerland) chaired by the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch.

The most important recommendations were to 1) restore the institute of Deaconesses, which is strongly supported by Archbishop Iakovos. 2) Request the Church to re-examine its liturgical texts, rites and attitudes, which appear to be demeaning or discriminatory to women. 3) To confirm the Church's teaching, which excludes the possibility of women's ordination to priests and bishops. Nothing is mentioned about tonsure of them as readers.

They also advocated "fuller participation of women in the life of the Church and acknowledged the current service of women in theology, Christian education, pastoral counseling, youth work, social services, iconography, Church administration, music and the ecumenical movement".

In reference to the question of the restoration of the institute of Deaconesses it is proper to recall that when the New Martyr Grand Duchess Elizabeth decided to establish a monastic community, she approached the Holy Synod with a request to have deaconesses in her community. The Holy Synod deliberated this question and refused her petition. The fundamental reasoning was that as there was no longer a need to assist at baptisms of adult women and the institute of deaconesses has ceased to exist so long ago that the legal reason of tradition, can no longer be applied in this case. According to Greek practice (existing to present) those baptised are smeared with oil over the whole body and that was the main service of deaconesses at baptism of adult women.

THE SHROUD OF TURIN

At the end of September, most of the major American newspapers and magazines, published a sensational news story: scientists had proved without a doubt, that the famous Shroud of Turin is definitely not the shroud in which Our Lord the Saviour was buried, but is a skillful forgery of the middle ages.

The Shroud of Turin has intrigued scientists for sometime, but until now the Vatican had refused to permit chemical analysis, because this required a piece the size of a regular handkerchief. However, advances made in the beginning of 1986, in the technique of determining the age of fabric have made it possible to work with a piece of fabric the size of a postage stamp.

In April of last year, identical pieces of fabric from the Shroud of Turin were sent

to 3 different and totally independent laboratories; Oxford (England), Zurich (Switzerland) and an American University in Arizona. In addition to this, every one of these laboratories received a sample of fabric already determined as belonging to the middle ages.

The research was done with atomic technology. A postage stamp sized sample of material was burned and processed to form dense pellets of pure carbon. The pellets were bombarded with atoms and directed into a device that measures the ratio of carbon 14 to other carbon atoms. The ratio determined the age of the sample. All three laboratories reached the same conclusion: the fabric was made between the 13th and 14th centuries.

The exposure of this fraud, is a source of terrible disappointment to the Catholic hierarchy and a multitude of faithful. Unfortunately, among those who believed in the authenticity of this shroud were some Orthodox people, including some clergy. Strangely, none of the believers in this Catholic fraud, ever gave a thought to the fact that the Orthodox Church does not have a tradition which tells us anything about the Lord's shroud. We know where the Holy Virgin's belt is, we know that before the crusaders destroyed Constantinople, one of its cathedrals housed the robe of the Holy Virgin, we know the history of the Lord's robe, which was given to tsar Alexis Michailovich by the Persian Shah and which was preserved in pre-revolutionary Russia, in the Assumption Cathedral in Moscow. But, no where is there a reference to the shroud. This new scientific discovery, will probably be a disappointment to those Orthodox who believed in this story.

THE CROSS IS DISTURBING

The New York Post of Nov. 2, 1988, published an article regarding a problem with the design for a new symbol of the "red cross" for identification of first aid establishments.

The City's Health and Hospitals Corporation awarded a contract to the Chermayeff and Geismar company to design a symbol, which would express hope and "enhance the image of the corporation" and solve "difficult identity problems". Last year the firm submitted a design to the agency, made at the cost of \$75,000, which was a single red cross with a heart cut out on its right side. Jewish organizations, immediately sounded an alarm. The president of the New York Board of Rabbis, Rabbi Pul Hait said, "We looked at it and said: somehow it is not right.....Again we are being overlooked".

Rabbi Hait said that the question of the "red cross" has been raised for the past 40 years and Jews are still unable to gain recognition of a "red Star of David" as a valid medical symbol, despite the fact that the International Red Cross did accept the Moslem Red Crescent.

The president of the Health and Hospitals Corporation, Paul Henri, defended the symbol of the Cross, stating that this choice "carries no religious connotation whatsoever and is a national and international symbol of health care.....The same cross is used in arithmetic and I would not want to teach my children without it". Another Jewish representative, the Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council, Michael Muller, who represents more than 60 Jewish organizations voiced his displeasure, saying that the City has a large Jewish population and therefore should stay away from using symbols of the cross.

The spokeswoman for the the Health and Hospitals Corporation, Suzanne Halpin, said that she is "optimistic" that an acceptable solution will be reached inspite of the fact that the partner of the firm which submitted the design, warned city officials that it may cost them \$75,000 worth of work which if not accepted, will go down the drain.

It is interesting to note that according to sources obtained by the Catholic paper, "Wanderer" of September 22, 1988, Judge Hogan ordered a huge cross (65 feet high) to

be removed from a marine base in Hawaii because, "The principle symbol of Christianity, this nation's dominant religion, is too laden with religious meaning to be appropriate for a government memorial assertedly free of any religious message".

Litigation regarding this issue began in 1986. The lawyer for the defence of the cross based his arguments on the fact that the wooden cross was erected in 1966 to memorialize Americans who were dead or missing in Vietnam. The attorney for the prosecution insisted that "even if you consider this just a memorial, a religious purpose is combined with a secular one".

Evidently, the Cross in any of its forms, is very disturbing to a very small percentage of a country, which until recent times considered itself to be Christian. It is worth while to note that even those who defend the symbol of the Cross, actually go out of their way to present it not as a Symbol of Christ's victory, but as a sign that has no important significance, but is still desirable in certain situations.

POLITICS ABOVE THE CHURCH AND CANONS

During the November presidential elections in the United States, the Democratic party candidate, Michael Dukakis, drew special attention from Orthodox people. Michael Dukakis was baptised in the Orthodox Church, is Greek by ethnic background and is united in a civil marriage with a Jewish woman. He did not have his children baptised in order to raise them in Judeo-Christian traditions. The majority of Greeks enthusiastically supported their compatriot, who deliberately visited Greek settlements and stressed his adherence to the Orthodox Church. However, he met with strong opposition from some Greek priests, who rightly insisted that Dukakis is living in sin and so may not receive Holy Communion.

Archbishop Iakovos, the Head of the Greek Orthodox Church in North America, found himself in a predicament. In his political sympathies, Archbishop Iakovos is a Republican, but in an attempt at impartiality, he composed a "prayer" for each of the parties. It is difficult to give those "prayers" any other name but blasphemy. In his "prayer" for the democrats he finds such expressions: "In Thine infinite, loving and providential care, continue to speak, o Lord, to the minds and heart of the people as they leave this Convention. Guide them and their nominee, Governor Michael Dukakis, whom they believe possesses the ideals and qualifications, the intellectual and emotional integrity needed to steer a steady course in our domestic and foreign affairs. The attention of the entire world is focused on this assembly in the hopeful anticipation that the great promises for equality, justice and peace for all peoples can be fulfilled by this Nation which leads the free world. Continue to keep this country as a steady hope for all their highest dreams".

The "prayer" for the Republicans was similar and also full of political terms.

Realizing that Dukakis had suddenly gained popularity with the general public, the far sighted Archbishop Iakovos, decided to take measures in case Dukakis is elected President. Archbishop Iakovos became concerned that if Dukakis is elected, it would be very embarrassing if the President of the United States is refused Holy Communion and this would damage his public image. He therefore, hastily contacted the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios. At the July 1988 biannual clergy-laity conference of the Greek Archdiocese, Archbishop Iakovos conducted a closed meeting with his clergy and announced that the Patriarchate has granted authority to parish priests in the USA to give Holy Communion, at their own pastoral discretion, to Orthodox Christians who were married and or divorced outside of the Church and have until now, been bared from receiving the sacraments. When asked by some priests if they would receive this permission in an encyclical or in any written form, Archbishop Iakovos replied in Greek " I'll never put that in writing".

The official publication of the Archdiocese, "The Orthodox Observer" of Nov. 9, 1988, in its section of Letters to the reader, printed 3 letters by priests, of which 2 supported the views of the Archbishop and one expressed sound Orthodox opinions on the illegal cohabitation in our times.

NEGOTIATIONS FOR UNIFICATION OF ORTHODOX SYRIANS AND MONOPHYSITES

The Ecumenical Press of Nov. 20, 1988 reported that the Orthodox and Monophysite Patriarchates entered into negotiations in order to unite as one Church. At the beginning of this year, Metropolitan Philip (Saliba), met with Patriarch Ignatios IV, in order to discuss the possibility of uniting the Orthodox Syrian (Antiochean) and Monophysite Syrian Patriarchates. The split occurred when part of the Syrian Church refused to accept the Orthodox teaching on the two natures of Jesus Christ, the divine and human, teaching that the human nature of Christ was absorbed by His divine nature.

Metropolitan Philip believes that the unification of monophysites with the Orthodox Church does not have to wait for a Pan Orthodox Council to convene, since the split occurred within the fold of the Syrian Church and she is the one to heal it. He also believes that the problem is not so much in the disagreement over the Chalcedonian definition of the dogma, but in the divergence of terminology, which was finally defined in the year 451. Since it is now outmoded to call anyone a heretic, the monophysites are now called "Oriental Orthodox" or non-Chalcedonians, which creates confusion for those not familiar with this subject. Additional confusion is caused by the fact that both Patriarch are named Ignatios.

In the beginning of 1986, a joint commission was established to work out details for unification of the two Patriarchates. Metropolitan Philip pointed out some practical difficulties for the expected reunion, for example such problems as the "existence of two Patriarchates, two Synods, the difference in liturgical rites, the calendar, etc". Should this reunion take place, the Syrian Church will have about 4 million members.

In principle, one can only feel joy at such a perspective, however, we know that Metropolitan Philip is an extremely secularized bishop. Several years ago the official publication of the Antiochean Church in the USA, printed a photograph of him dressed in a cowboy suit with revolvers in his holster and hands. Therefore it is difficult to predict the outcome: will the monophysites become Orthodox, or was the question of reunion raised for political and material reasons. Certainly it would be wonderful to see the conversion of heretics to Orthodoxy, but not the Orthodox demeaning themselves by compromise.

REPOSE OF TWO ABBESSES

In Jerusalem, October of 1988 brought the unexpected death of the Abbess of the Gethsemane Convent, Mother Abbess Theodosia. Mother Theodosia was well known for her hospitality. She was preparing to receive His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly in her convent and personally started to knead dough for a pie. The strain was too much for her and this caused a heart attack. She was rushed to the nearest hospital where she died. Before her appointment to the Holy Land, Mother Theodosia was in a convent in the Canadian Diocese. The schedule of His Eminence the Metropolitan did not permit him to preside at the funeral service of his spiritual daughter.

In November 1988, the convent of Novo Diveyevo in Spring Valley, lost its Abbess, Mother Seraphima (Yansen). The aged Abbess was ailing for some time and her death was not unexpected for the convent. Mother Seraphima was very respected for her directness and loved for her friendliness and attention to people's needs. Unfortunately, the convent's administration did not make an announcement in the Russian language paper, therefore many found out about her burial too late to be able to escort her with prayers to her grave.

REPOSE OF PROTOPRESBYTER MICHAEL POMAZANSKY

On Friday Oct. 22/Nov. 4, Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, reposed peacefully in his cell in the Holy Trinity Monastery. He died only a few weeks short of his 100th birthday. Fr. Michael, was probably the last graduate of an Ecclesiastical Academy of pre-revolutionary Russia. For more than 30 years he taught at the Holy Trinity Seminary. He was the author of an excellent book on Orthodox dogma, which was translated and published in English, several other books and numerous articles. His death is a very big loss for our Church and the Seminary in particular. In spite of his advanced age, Fr. Michael retained his memory and was able to write articles almost to the time of his repose. He was also an outstanding pedagogue and lecturer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

We received donations and sincerely thank: Fr. S. Schneider, Priest-monk Thomas, Mr. and Mrs. Soroka, G. Meyer, Fr. S. Pukh, Fr. B. Kizenko, J. Sergienko, Mr. and Mrs. Kossovich, Mr. and Mrs. Wells, J. Hudanich and two anonymous donors.

MANY THANKS TO ALL