



# CHURCH NEWS

FEBRUARY-MARCH 1988

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## FROM THE EDITORS:

The response to our first issue of "CHURCH NEWS" was very gratifying. We received a number of donations, for which we are very thankful. Moreover, the mail was very favorable to our project. We especially valued the favorable response from our METROPOLITAN VITALY. In addition, we have received inquiries regarding the identity of our Editorial Board. We are happy to satisfy this justified curiosity of our readers. Our Editorial Board consists of Mrs. T. Michurin, Mrs. M. Evdochenk-Wells and Mrs. V. Sepe, who is also our Treasurer. The Editor-in-Chief is Mrs. V. Schatiloff. As to the Publishers, we consider them to be all those who supported our idea, and with their donations made this publication possible.

Should any other publication wish to use any of the information contained in "CHURCH NEWS", we have no objection, but we do request that the source be identified.

Inasmuch as our staff is very small, it will not be possible for us to personally thank every donor. We will therefore list the donations received at the end of each issue. If you wish to remain anonymous, please be kind enough to advise us. Inasmuch as a cancelled check is a valid receipt, we will mail receipts only for cash donations.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 70th Anniversary of the Communist Revolution in Russia, the Moscow Patriarchate issued a special Epistle. It was briefly mentioned in some ecclesiastical publications, but nowhere was the complete text made available to the public. Anyone wishing to receive verification of the revolting servitude of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Godless government of the Soviet Union, can receive the complete text of this Epistle by sending us a self-addressed envelope and \$1.00 to cover the cost of copying. Obviously, it is not in the best interest of the Moscow Patriarchate and her sympathizers that this disgraceful Epistle be publicized.

EXCERPTS OF LETTERS FROM THE USSR RECEIVED BY BISHOP GREGORY.

(12/23/87) "I heard on BBC Radio, the complete text of the excellent reply of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, to the invitation of the Moscow Patriarchate. It is worthy of notice that the BBC transmitted the complete text, while Fr. Victor Potapov, only a part of it, omitting the part concerning Ecumenism.

I am surprised by the speed at which the "Mystery of Lawlessness" is advancing, proclaiming the senselessness of the Christian Religion. For example: John Kirkpatrick just recently used a new term - 'Hanukah-Nativity Period'. The Moscow Patriarchate is very actively developing the theme of the identity of Christianity and the Revolutionaries. The idea of "Human Rights" being separated from the idea of a person's obligations, is leading to the same nonsense. Fr. Gleb Yakunin, who thinks more about those Rights than about the Church, has reached a new high in paradoxical ideology: although he is a Christian Priest, he advocates the opening of an Idolator's Temple (Hari Krishna)....."

(Dec. 23/Jan. 8, 1988)".....Fr. Vladimir Rusak has not been released. Moreover, he is in very difficult circumstances, very often incarcerated in isolation, as an additional penalty. I am surprised that Fr. Gleb Yakunin, in his appeals to the Government, does not deem it necessary to demand the release of Fr. Vladimir Rusak. It seems that Fr. Vladimir is forgotten. Much more is said about Jewish 'otkazniki'..... Taking this into consideration, all the letters referring to the betterment of relations between the State and the Church, if they ignore the fact of Fr. Vladimir's incarceration, are senseless. Rather, they are deceiving, since while trying to establish 'peace' between Church and State on the basis that the Church has recognized the good of the Revolution, since Fr. Rusak is of the opposite opinion, this puts him in the wrong. In this I see the main defect of Fr. Gleb Yakunin's letter in reference to the Patriarchal Epistle on the Anniversary of the Revolution, he never mentioned Fr. Vladimir. Also the monstrous idea of the Epistle, that is, that believers supposedly found in the Revolution, the fulfillment of their religious hopes. Radio Liberty has broadcast an article from the magazine "Referendum", (unfortunately I could not make out the name of the author) in reference to the Patriarchal Epistle and Fr. Gleb's reply. The author very properly calls Fr. Gleb's letter a "half truth", and consequently an untruth, which verifies the propagandized new lie that there is a possibility of establishing a new relationship between the State and the Church, which would be based on an unchristian foundation....."

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE JEWS

The newspaper "JERUSALEM POST" of 1/17/88, reports that at the headquarters of the Soviet Mission in Jerusalem, the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate have sponsored a symposium to mark the millenium of the Baptism of Russia. Participants were members of the Soviet clergy, and Jewish scientists, Professors Michael Agursky and Dimitry Segal. The Soviet Church was represented by Bishop Theophan, Vicar of Metropolitan Philaret, who is the head of Foreign Relations for the Moscow Patriarchate. Also present were delegates from the Church of Georgia, and members of the consular delegation. Other guests were representatives of the Foreign Ministry and the Religious Ministry of Israel, Jewish interfaith activists, and Hebrew University scholars.

The Jewish Professors spoke of the relationship between the Orthodox Church and Judaism, attempting to present it in a positive manner.



The Newspaper concludes this report with the following words: "Whatever the content of the talk, the fact that it could be delivered under the auspices of the Russian Orthodox Church gave promise of a new era in relations between the two Faiths."

The connections existing now between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Jews is becoming more and more noticeable. A Greek parish bulletin "ORTHODOX WITNESS" recently published information borrowed from a Jewish newspaper, "JEWISH REPORTER", published in Massachusetts. It is said that a Russian Orthodox Monastery in Moscow, was the unlikely scene of a recent Saturday evening Havdalah Service, conducted by a leader of the Reform Jewish Movement in the U.S.A. The occasion for this "Service" was a meeting of the governing board of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, held in Moscow May 31--June 3, 1987. The Service was led by Norma Levitt, who is one of nine international presidents of this organization. During this Havdalah ceremony, Norma Levitt passed around a box filled with cloves, explaining that "the spices sweeten the parting from a day of light and rest".... "This is a ceremony of separation, not only from the Sabbath, but also from the unholy; from indifference to the poor and deprived, the sick and the aged; from hatred and violence." At the end of this "Service", Miss Levitt presented to Metropolitan Philaret, a box with spices and the braided Havdalah candle. Metropolitan Philaret is a member of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Unfortunately, the newspaper does not specify which Monastery Metropolitan Philaret permitted to be desecrated, but most likely it was the Danilov Monastery, which recently was returned to the Church by the Soviets, and which is to be the center for the Moscow Patriarchate's ecumenical activities.

#### "BELIEVERS' MEETING" IN MOSCOW.

On 2/9/88, a meeting was held in the Moscow Palace of Culture to "bring together believers of all denominations in Moscow" with representatives of state and social organizations. Speaking on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan YUVENALI of Krutitsy and Kolomna stated that "perestroika" has had a beneficial effect on the life of the Church and all religious communities, creating conditions in which the Church can "fulfill its mission": this mission Metropolitan Yuvenali defined as "working for peace, participating in humanitarian initiatives and social organizations".

Keston College sources in the USSR report that all the priests and church wardens of Moscow city churches were ordered to attend this meeting, but not advised of its purpose. The meeting adopted a document "warmly approving" the US-USSR INF treaty and pledging support for the "total liquidation of nuclear and chemical weapons". Among "Believers" were representatives of Muslims and Jews.

This convention also accepted an Epistle, which was announced from the ambos of all Orthodox Churches in Moscow. It was signed by three names: Mufti (high-ranking Muslim clergyman) Vabahanov, Rabbi Shayeovich, and Metropolitan Yuvenali. According to our sources, one Moscow priest was visibly ashamed while reading this "epistle", and did not have the courage to announce to the congregation, who the co-signers with the Metropolitan were. For the first time in the history of the Orthodox Church, from an Orthodox ambo, the faithful were obliged to listen to an "epistle" which was signed by a Mufti, a Rabbi, and an Orthodox Bishop! Verily, in its efforts to please its Godless masters, the Moscow Patriarchate has lost the concept of any boundaries.

## CONCELEBRATION OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH WITH THE ROMAN POPE.

During December 1987, the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios made a trip abroad. He visited all the Orthodox Patriarchs, and in addition, he visited the Roman Pope in the Vatican, and Anglican Archbishop Runcie in London.

The official publication of the Greek Archdiocese in America, "ORTHODOX OBSERVER", gave its readers a detailed account of this trip. The paper even briefly mentioned that the Patriarch visited the Vatican. Yet it omitted a very important fact, namely that while in the Vatican, Patriarch Demetrios concelebrated the Liturgy with the Pope. With the typical resourcefulness of Constantinople, the Patriarch and the Pope served the Liturgy of the Catechumens on one altar, and the Liturgy of the Faithful on a separate altar.

In spite of the great significance of this act, the ecclesiastical press stubbornly keeps quiet about this immediate betrayal of Orthodoxy by Constantinople. None of the Catholic and Protestant publications, even such neutral ones as the Ecumenical Press and the Keston News, made mention of it!

Out of twenty Monasteries on Mt. Athos, thirteen have refused to commemorate the Patriarch after this sad event. The Athonite Fathers sent a delegation to the Patriarch with their protest, which we will most certainly publish, the minute the text is available to us.

One must note with great sadness, that the Abbot of a Monastic Community in the suburbs of London, Archimandrite Alexis, considered it proper to appear at the reception in honor of Patriarch Demetrios, as a representative of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and even presented the Patriarch with an icon of St. Edward. (THE SHEPHERD, Vol. VIII, #4: 1/88)

## DID METROPOLITAN NIKODIM BECOME A ROMAN CATHOLIC?

The samizdat journal "CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY BULLETIN" (#3, pp. 194-195) carries a short piece by Hieromonk Michael (Gavrilov) concerning the history of Catholicism in Russia. Hieromonk Michael gives special mention to the late Metropolitan Nikodim (Rotov) of Leningrad and Novgorod, who died of a heart attack during a Papal audience in Rome on Sept. 5th, 1978.

Hieromonk Michael, who knew the late Metropolitan, writes:

"...While still an Archimandrite (Nikodim) began collecting data for a Doctoral thesis on the late Pope John XXIII, a work which was subsequently published in the Moscow patriarchate's publication THEOLOGICAL WORKS #19 (Bogoslovskie Trudy).

Metropolitan Nikodim, a very close friend, told me in confidence: 'You know, at that time I was just an ordinary Russian priest, in leather boots and with long hair. But the more I learned about the late Pope John XXIII, the more I realized that this is not the basis of the Christian faith. The Pope influenced me greatly, especially his openness and straightforwardness'.

To understand what Metropolitan Nikodim was like, one must bear in mind that he was really three personalities which coexisted and manifested themselves variously: there was Nikodim, the Russian Orthodox Metropolitan; Nikodim the true patriot of his Socialist homeland, who cooperated with the KGB through force of circumstances; and, finally, Nikodim the sincere, convinced Catholic and clandestine (secret) Catholic Bishop. The inevitable tensions generated by the complexities of his situation could not but have adverse effect on his private life, to psychological and nervous stresses, but it never precipitated any kind of spiritual crisis because this amazing man found the support he needed in the Catholic faith....."



#### NEW CHIEF OF THE RUSSIAN ECCLESIASTICAL MISSION IN JERUSALEM.

According to a Decree of the Synod of Bishops, a clergyman of the Australian diocese, Abbot Alexis (Rosenthal), was raised by Metropolitan Vitaly to the rank of Archimandrite at the end of January 1988, and appointed to the position of Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. When handing him the Abbot's Staff, Metropolitan Vitaly stressed the importance of this position to every Russian Orthodox. The responsibilities inherent in this position are made more complicated by the very difficult political situation in the Holy Land.

#### JEWS AND CATHOLICS.

The conflict created by the statement of Cardinal Ratzinger that Judaism finds its fulfillment in Christianity, is in no way settled, in spite of all Catholic efforts to make more "explanations". Actually, the Cardinal's office did apologize to the Jews and retreated from the argument, still trying to prove that the Cardinal's words were misinterpreted and incorrectly translated. All these explanations did not satisfy the Jewish side, and the Catholics had to retreat still further. The Cardinal took advantage of the fact that he was scheduled to deliver a scholastic historical lecture at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in New York City, and Cardinal O'Connor (Archbishop of New York) hosted a reception in honor of Cardinal Ratzinger's arrival, to which he invited a number of Rabbis, so that they might meet with the Cardinal, who is considered to be the most trusted adviser of the Pope and is head of the Congregation for Doctrine and Faith.

The NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER of Feb. 5th, 1988, quotes Rabbi Mark Tannenbaum, who is well known for his ecumenical activities, and who is also the Chairman of the International Committee on Interreligious Consultation, as saying "Cardinal Ratzinger's recent statement in an Italian newspaper, cut to the core of Christian-Jewish relations, and made a mockery of everything that has taken place between Christians and Jews over the last 22 years. It is important that any discussion should include responsible Jewish theologians and scholars." Rabbi Tannenbaum also said that a meeting was planned for the end of February 1988, between Cardinal Willebrands and the most learned Jewish theologians and scholars. (This meeting has not as yet taken place.)

The JEWISH PRESS of Feb. 5th, 1988, gave a few more details about the meeting of the Rabbis and Cardinal Ratzinger. The paper stated with satisfaction, that the Cardinal "struck a conciliatory note on Jewish-Catholic relations when asked at a news conference to give his perception of the Catholic view of Judaism." The Cardinal answered that Catholics should "respect the point of view of our Jewish brothers" who do not see the New Testament "as a fulfillment" of the faith of Abraham in the person of Jesus Christ. The paper stressed that Ratzinger "seems to balance his previous comments with admiring reflections on Jews and Judaism". The Cardinal added that "we must be able to read the Old Testament the way the Jews read it, rather than always looking at it from a Christian perspective".

The few Rabbis who accepted Cardinal O'Connor's invitation and met with Cardinal Ratzinger, declared that the absence of any other Rabbis was not because they wanted to boycott the reception, but that they felt that such a serious matter should be discussed at a higher level than just a social reception.

The conflict between Catholics and Jews is far from being resolved. The Jews feel hurt that the Pope met with Austria's President Waldheim, in spite of their protests, and they also feel that the Pope does not show enough interest in refuting the antisemitic demonstrations in connection with the Arab uprisings in the Holy Land.

#### MIRACULOUS ICON IN ATHENS.

The magazine of the Serbian Monastery on Mt. Athos, HILANDER, (with the same title), in its Christmas issue, published a report about the visit of the Miraculous Icon of the Holy Virgin "MEET IT IS, IN TRUTH". The Icon, which is always enshrined on Mt. Athos, arrived in Athens in connection with the visit to Greece of the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios. By meeting the Patriarch with special solemnity, the Greek Church wanted to demonstrate to the government, her power and unity. Just a short while ago the Socialist government of Greece declared that all real property owned by the Church would be confiscated, and that the Church would receive from the government, a modest subsidy. In addition, the government planned to be in control of elections of candidates for Episcopal thrones, and their appointments to particular dioceses. Furthermore, parochial life would be controlled by the State through its specially appointed representatives.

The Icon left the Monastery accompanied by all the members of the Protaton, Mt. Athos' governing body. In order to receive the Icon, the government had to send a military ship. When the Athonite Fathers, singing the Lytia, brought the Icon to shore, all the inhabitants of Mt. Athos came to the pier. The sirens of all the ships docked at the pier mingled with the ringing of the bells of all the Churches, and the enthusiastic singing of the people. The people of Athens met the Icon with special solemnity. Young and old in huge crowds, were standing in the streets with hand censers, candles and flowers. Many were kneeling. For the first time in the history of their City, they were meeting the Abbess of the Holy Mountain. The main market place of the city, Omnia (unity) became the center for the meeting of representatives of Church and State. This was made clear by all the greeting speeches addressed to the Patriarch, and by his responses.

The Icon was placed in the Cathedral, and it was planned that it would remain there for ten days. But the stream of people who wanted to venerate the Icon was so huge, that the Athonite Fathers announced on radio that the Icon would remain in Athens as long as the people would come to venerate it. Every day's Liturgical Cycle was observed, and in between the scheduled services, Akathists were sung.

The Athonite Fathers used part of their time for negotiations between the representatives of the Church and the Government. The press admitted that the presence in Athens of the Abbess of the Holy Mountain, united the Greek Church and the Government, and that the talks and negotiations between them lost their sharpness. The Government was obliged to retreat and to take public opinion into account.

#### BURIAL OF SOVIET AUTHOR SOLOUKHIN'S MOTHER.

The magazine NEW WORLD, published in the Soviet Union (1987, #9) printed a very interesting, yet very poignant article by Soviet writer Vladimir Soloukhin, who described in detail, the funeral of his aged mother, Stepanida, in 1967. Soloukhin is a person with very powerful government connections, yet, when he had to buy a coffin for his deceased mother, he had to stand in line for several hours. All the coffins were exactly the same size and construction. Since his mother had died in Minsk, and the funeral was to be in Moscow, in order to transport the body a metal case had to be made. In order to obtain this, Soloukhin first had to invoke the assistance of sympathetic Scientists, Deputies, and Laureates, until finally, in order to complete this "operation coffin", as he ironically describes it, he had to enlist the assistance of a government Minister. Soloukhin was informed that he had to go to the market place in Minsk, and that there he would find a craftsman who, as a special favor to the Minister, would make a metal box for the coffin and would seal it.



The second obstacle was finding a Priest. The wrighter was not aware that, in order to have a Priest walking behind the coffin to the cemetery, especially if this was outside of the Parish region, he would have to obtain a special permit. He finally found a Priest, who immediately asked him if he had a permit. Soloukhin figured that if he applied for a permit, more time would be wasted. He decided that his connections would be sufficient to get one later on, so he told the Priest that he had spoken with the authorities and that a permit had been promised him, and that he would get it later on. The Priest trusted him, and performed the burial service.

The day after the funeral, Soloukhin applied for the necessary permit, and again met with many difficulties. He had a close friend who was a high authority in the region. After a very long conversation, many telephone calls and supplications by this friend, the matter was "settled". As a special favor, the poor Priest was not removed from his Parish, but was only very sternly reprimanded.

If a celebrity such as Soloukhin met with so many difficulties in order to give his Mother a decent Christian burial, one can only imagine how it must be for the "plain mortals" in the USSR. One can only appreciate not only the irony, but also the sadness of this tale told by this very talented writer.

#### ECUMENICAL COMMUNITY IN TAIZE, FRANCE.

An independent Catholic publication the NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER of 2/12/88, devoted several pages to a French ecumenical Community, located in Taize, Burgundy. This Community is well known in religious circles. It enjoys special popularity among young people of various nations. Some 3,000 pilgrims visit it every Summer. The Community itself consists of only 80 members throughout the world. It presents a mixture of Catholicism and Protestantism, together with Orthodox symbolism. The founder is a Swiss, Roger Schutz, who belonged to the Swiss Reformed Church. In 1940 he came up with the idea of the necessity to reconcile Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. He therefore adopted those features of Catholicism which he liked, made use of Protestantism's interest in the Scriptures, and in order to create "mysticism" in his new Faith, started to use Russian Orthodox Icons. Yet, Roger Schutz claims that he has no intention of creating a new religion, but that he is only searching for a means to reconcile the various Christian branches.

Originally, his Brotherhood consisted of Protestants only, and then, strange as it may seem, a Paris Catholic Archbishop permitted one Catholic monk to join this group. From that time on, the Community started to openly disclose its aim to unite, at some future time, Catholics and Prostantants. They now have some 30 Catholics in their Community. Yet, officially this group has no canonical ties with the Catholic Church. Schutz says that he himself has reconciled with Catholicism, yet he feels free to retain his Protestant views and has no intention of relinquishing them. Three members of this unusual Community settled in New York, not far from the center of promiscuity, drug dealing and crime - the world famous Times Square. One large size photograph depicts two young men with their legs folded under them, sitting in front of a bare wall, on which hangs a copy of the Icon of the Holy Virgin of Vladimir. On the floor, which is decorated with a few pine branches, sits a candle.

The Community supports itself in France by selling ceramics and by printing their Magazine in nine different languages, entitled "LETTERS FROM TAIZE". They also have a spacious temple in which are conducted Protestant-type services. Mostly they consist of some Psalms, readings from the Bible, and then 10 - 20 minutes of "meditation". A Catholic Priest supplies them with the consecrated hosts for communion, for those who want it. At the entrance of the temple is a large sign in six languages: "The Catholic Eucharist is reserved and venerated next to the Icon of the Virgin Mary." "It is from this reserve that Communion is distributed daily. Receiving Communion daily, (so-called frequent Communion) is not customary in Protestantism. Protestants can receive the Lord's Supper at the entrance of the chapel, to the right of the Cross."

The published article explains to the reader how one should "pray with the Icons". "Find an Icon you feel comfortable with, preferably one of the face of Jesus or Mary, light a candle in front of it, turn off the lights, and look at the Icon while listening quietly to some Taize chants." The address of this group is given, and the price of the cassette. "A good 15 to 20 minute meditative practice with which to begin or end the day." the author Eileen Egan tells us. Certainly, this instruction can only make an Orthodox person smile sadly, and nothing else. Unfortunately, there are some Orthodox people who see in the teaching of this Community, a certain resemblance to Orthodoxy.

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His Eminence, Metropolitan Vitaly; Archimandrite Nicholas; Archpriest Theodore Martynenko; Archpriest John Show; Archpriest Philaret Astrakhansky; Archpriest Vladimir Shishkoff; Priest George Primak; Priest Nicholas Artemov; Priest Stephen Romanchak; Rev. Alexander Kochergin; Deacon Karpovich; Nun Mariam; Mr. & Mrs. V. Harris; Dr. M. Astman; Mr. B. Krassovsky; Mrs. V. Sepe; Dr. V. Zezulin; Mrs. Tuniks-Rosniansky; Mr. P. Azworotny; Archimandrite Nectarios; Priest V. Melehov; Dr. Johnson; and three anonymous donors.