



CHURCH NEWS

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With this first issue (No. 56) of Volume 6 we will endeavor to regularly publish an exact English translation of the Russian version of "Church News" which we began in the fall of 1988. We have received many requests from members of our Church Abroad who do not speak Russian to begin publishing in English. We hope with your support to issue in English bi-monthly.

The Russian version of this publication exists entirely due to the voluntary support of our readers. We do not have a fixed subscription fee, but we would like our prospective readers to realize that in order to provide information from various sources, we have to maintain numerous subscriptions that are not cheap. In addition, there are the expenses of producing the text and, of course, postal fees.

We intend to follow with the English subscription the same policy of gratefully accepting donations to help cover our expenses.

CHURCH NEWS
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THE RECENT COUNCIL OF THE BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA

From September 3rd to 15th the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia convened their usually annual council (sobor). At this time the information concerning the proceedings is less than scanty. At present the Council has not published even the traditional Epistles to the Diaspora Flock and to the people in Russia.

Nevertheless, those interested have managed to obtain some information on the decisions taken at the Council.

The request of Bishop Arsenius of Briansk and Tula, who had received his episcopacy within the Free Russian Church, to be admitted into the ROCOR, to the surprise of many, was not accepted. His status, however, is in no way any different from that of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Agathangel, who were received previously.

The present situation of Bishop Arsenius is in no way enviable. His hopes of being received into the ROCOR have not been realized; his return to the hierarchy of the Free Russian Church is also very unlikely. Any transfer to the Moscow Patriarchate is similarly doubtful. In other words, after breaking the most basic ecclesiastical rules, Bishop Arsenius, instead of peacefully continuing to manage his diocese, has ended up belonging to no hierarchy whatsoever!

According to a Council decision, Archbishop Lazarus, who on several occasions rushed from one hierarchy to another, was at this time definitely retired and his see was granted to his former cleric, Bishop Agathangel, whose new title is not yet known.

Bishop Hilarion, who has been in the position of Deputy Secretary of the Synod, while in fact he has been the actual Secretary, was elevated to the rank of Archbishop and has been appointed to the Diocese of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand. Bishop Gabriel who had been consecrated for Australia (as is rumored, by his own request) has not gone to Australia but remains in New York with the title Bishop of Manhattan.

Archbishop Hilarion has already departed for his new appointment. Evidently, he continues to retain his position as Deputy Secretary, although it remains a puzzle who will manage the Synod Office in his absence and what will be the means of financing his travel expenses if he is to oversee that office.

Originally it had been planned to convene the council (of all the bishops), at the invitation of Bishop Cyprianos who offered to pay for any expenses involved, in his monastery at Fili outside Athens, Greece. However, several bishops objected to this. The project was cancelled and a new one substituted for it: to arrange for a Synodal meeting (in other words, only the standing ruling committee of usually 5 bishops). But then came another change: after a very detailed report by one of the bishops of Western Europe concerning the Cyprianos' hierarchy, this entire project was cancelled.

On Monday, October 20th, according to a Council decision, the solemn glorification in San Francisco of Jonah, Bishop of Khankou, Manchuria, will take place. It became known, however, that Metropolitan Vitaly intended not to serve that day in San Francisco, but would himself perform the rite of glorification in one of the parishes of the Chicago Diocese.

EVENTS FROM THE LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA

The Repose of Archbishop Seraphim (Svezhevsky)

On Saturday, September 14th, His Grace Seraphim (Svezhevsky), former Archbishop of Caracas and Venezuela, peacefully passed away at the age of ninety-seven.

Just a few days before his death, Vladyka (at his own request) was driven to New York where the Council of Bishops was being held, in order to bid farewell to all the members of the Council.

In spite of his advanced age, Archbishop Seraphim retained to the end an exceptional memory and recognised his acquaintances even after not seeing them for several years. He had been in his youth a graduate of a Cadet School (a military style secondary school in pre-revolutionary Russia) and had kept in close touch with all his fellow students. As he explained at one of the Cadet reunions: "Here among you I am a 'you' (using the familiar form in Russian), while out there (indicating the world outside the doors) I am a 'sir' (using the formal form of the personal pronoun)."

The final years of his life were spent in retirement at the Novo-Divyevo Convent in Spring Valley, New York. In accordance with his last will, his funeral and burial service were performed in Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, where he had been a monk prior to being consecrated bishop.

Vladyka was distinguished for his great prayerfulness and his extreme humility.

A New Manner of Glorification in the Church Abroad

On October 7/20th in San Francisco the glorification of Bishop Jonah (in the world, Vladimir Pokrovsky) will take place. He was first bishop of Tjancin and subsequently of Khankou, Manchuria. He reposed in October of 1925 at the age of 37 of blood infection.

The Diocese of San Francisco made an effort to obtain his relics from China, but the grave site had been destroyed by some explosion and was, therefore, unsuccessful. Bishop Jonas was widely known in China for his philanthropic activities but the general Russian diaspora had no information about him. It is said that shortly after his repose he

appeared to a lame boy and told him that he no longer needed his legs and that the boy could have them. After that the boy was cured.

In contradiction to the Church traditions accepted for many centuries, according to which the glorification of any saint begins with local veneration which gradually becomes more widespread and as a result of which the Church solemnly formalizes this veneration with the order of canonisation, this time the process was totally atypical.

Under the former First Hierarchs of ROCOR, the flock was gradually prepared ahead of time by the hierarchy and clergy for the coming glorification of a new saint. Thus, before the glorification of saints John of Kronstadt, Herman of Alaska, Blessed Xenia (all of them already widely venerated), as well as the New Martyrs of Russia, in every parish pannikhidas were served on their days of commemoration, lectures and sermons were given, articles with biographical information including miracles which came about as a result of prayers to them were published. Even prior to the glorification of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, the flock abroad was prepared by constant observance of his special days, although the myriad of his miracles during his life and after his repose spoke for themselves. Thus the announcement of his glorification was met with genuine joy by the majority of the faithful.

The glorification of Saints Nicholas of Japan and Innocent of Irkutsk, on the other hand, showed that the faithful were totally unprepared for this event. The main celebration of the glorification was held in Mayfield, Pennsylvania, while a very minimal number of clergy happened to serve a moleben after the Divine Liturgy, not even having their icons!

The icons of the newly glorified were not available at the time of this celebration; there were no services for them (and to this day still do not exist, even as there is no service to St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco); while their detailed lives were published only several months after their glorifications. But at that time at least some of the faithful had an idea that these two saints were extraordinary missionaries.

But in the case of Jonah the situation is much worse. Except for a small handful of former residents of China, who are mostly concentrated in San Francisco, no one has ever heard of him, not only among the laity, but among the clergy as well! The Synod of Bishops did not even trouble itself to officially inform at least its clergy. There are no widely distributed biography of the new saint nor a photograph or an icon. Previously they were sent out to every parish some time ahead.

Of course, the personality of the just glorified Bishop Jonah can in no way be compared to Archbishop Luke Voino-Yassenetsky (an internationally known surgeon in Stalin's time) nor even Dimitry Donskoi both recently canonized by the Moscow Patriarchate. But this method reminds one of the Moscow Patriarchate: say little about the new saint, then later comes the official information that on this or that date he was canonized.

The festival which occurred in San Francisco should be properly called not a glorification, but the beginning of local veneration in this city.

A Funeral Service in the Synod Cathedral for Generals Kutepov and Miller

According to a resolution of the Synod of Bishops dated September 11, 1996, a solemn episcopal funeral service for Generals A. Kutepov and E. Miller was served in the Synod Cathedral.

Both were kidnapped in the 1930's by the Bolsheviks in broad daylight in the middle of Paris and taken to the Soviet Union. The date of their deaths was not known abroad and therefore no funeral service had ever been held.

Unfortunately, those who arranged this solemn funeral service (performed by 9 bishops and the full Synodal Choir) did not take into account that the service would be held at 4 P.M. and in the middle of the week. Because of this, there were very few faithful present in the church.

From the Pages of the Periodical "Church Life"

The only recently -- and very belatedly -- published official periodical of the Russian Church Outside Russia "Church Life" (which one is tempted at times to call "Church Torment") in the issues Nos. 1-2 for the months January-April, 1996, informs us of the resolutions of the Session of the Hierarchical Synod from 20th and 21st of February, 1996.

Regarding the suspended Archpriest Alexis Averianov (in Russia):

"On 7/20 February, 1996, it was RESOLVED:

1. To deprive the Archpriest Alexis Averianov of the priestly rank due to his transgression of the following ecclesiastical canons: the 25th Apostolic, the 3rd and 51st of St. Basil the Great, the 4th Rule of St. Gregory of Nyssa, and the Statutes of the Ecclesiastical Consistories No. 185. In addition, by serving while being under suspension, he violated also the Apostolic Canon 28, 38 of the Council of Carthage and 88 (at the end) of St. Basil the Great.

2. To send to Bishop Eutychius a copy of this Synod resolution that he is to convey to Archpriest Alexis Averianov, reception of which is to be acknowledged by signature..."

Some time ago, the Synod of Bishops received complaints about Averianov from both Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentine, which were totally disregarded.

"On the same date, was HEARD: the case of Priest Serge Perekrestov, who was suspended by the Council of Bishops held in Lesna, France, in November, 1994.

At the session of the Synod of Bishops on 25 November/8 December, 1995, in his report His Grace Bishop Euty chius pointed out that Priest Serge Perekrestov must be tried by an ecclesiastical court for the purpose of depriving him of priestly rank. On the same date it was resolved to accept the case of Priest Serge Perekrestov for procedure by the Synod of Bishops such that for the next session of the Synod a report will be available about this matter..."

"The Synod of Bishops having familiarized itself with the case of Priest Serge Perekrestov, concludes, that by his acts he has violated the following canons: 25 Apostolic, 1st Rule of the Council of Neocesarea, 3rd, 32nd, and 89th (on inebriation) of St. Basil the Great, 4th Rule of St. Gregory of Nyssa and Articles Nos. 185 and 181 of the Statutes of the Ecclesiastical Consistories on nonsobriety.

In accordance with the above mentioned, the Synod of Bishops RESOLVES:

In accordance with Article 185 of the Statutes of the Ecclesiastical Consistories, no one revealed to have violated chastity or the sanctity of marriage may remain with the rank of priest, but is excluded from it (which is the subject matter of the above canons); therefore, on the basis of these ecclesiastical canons, the Priest Serge Perekrestov may no longer remain with the rank of priest

BE IT ORDERED:

1. To deem Priest Serge Perekrestov deprived of priestly rank in accordance with the above ecclesiastical canons.
2. To send to him a copy of this resolution and grant to him a two week period for appeal of this resolution. If his appeal shall not be received, then upon the signature of the minutes, this resolution enters into legal force.
3. To inform His Grace Bishop Euty chius of this resolution by official decree for conveyance to him to be acknowledged by signature."

It is not our intention to excuse the transgressions of S. Perekrestov, but one has to note that it seems the Synod of Bishops takes for granted that the majority of clergy in Russia own their own fax machines. It is common knowledge that letters to Russia and from there abroad, in the best of circumstances, require three to four weeks each way. Therefore, the two week time limit given to Perekrestov for appeal is insufficient.

It is also worthwhile to remember, that in April, 1993, Archbishop Lazarus, who was at that time in communion with the Church Abroad, among a whole series of complaints to the Council of Bishops about the activities of hierarchs from Church Abroad within the borders of his diocese, in reasonable detail reported that he had ordered an investigation of Perekrestov and convicted him of exactly the same transgressions that are mentioned in the Synod resolution -- only three years later. At that time his complaints to the Council which can be basically summarized as an accusation of Metropolitan Vitaly himself and Bishop Barnabas, were not given any consideration. But the First Hierarch himself over the head of Archbishop Lazarus (while his priest Perekrestov was already under suspension by his archbishop) sent to the priest's church warden Nikitin (himself accused of swindling) completely modern printing equipment. Meanwhile, Archbishop Lazarus, in whose diocesan business Metropolitan Vitaly was illegally interfering, received from the latter his extensive personal letter about the former's violations of supposedly existing regulations of the Church Abroad (naturally, not cited) by which a bishop who desires to investigate any one of his parishes supposedly has to warn the cleric involved ahead of time!

"On 8/21 February HEARD:

A report by His Grace Bishop Hilarion concerning the pastoral courses to be instituted in the monastery in Blanco, Texas. The classes are to be conducted in English. These courses, for the time being, will be of a local nature, but they are already widely known of among Orthodox Americans..."

If our readers noted the information concerning the burial of Bishop Constantine at this monastery, which was published in our "Church News", No. 5 of 1996, they will be able to arrive at an idea of what the quality of the courses will be. One should also note, as is obvious from the published text of the resolutions of the Council, that these courses were begun without the knowledge or permission of the Church Abroad authorities.

"On the same date, was DISCUSSED the status of of His Grace Bishop Agathangel of Simferopol.

RESOLVED: to appoint His Grace Agathangel of Simferopol as vicar of the Presiding Bishop of the Synod of Bishops until the Council of Bishops."

MORE ON THE SITUATION WITH THE PROPERTY IN JERICHO

The President of the Jerusalem Section of the Orthodox Palestine Society, Archimandrite Anthony, on August 19, 1996, received a letter from the Office of the Palestinian National Authority.

The exact and complete text of the letter is as follows:

8/19/96
Palestinian National Authority
The Palestinian Legislative Council
The Speaker

Archimandrite A. Grabbe
The OPS, Inc.
Holy Land Section

This is to confirm receiving your letter dated July 17th, 1996. I would like to inform you that I have handle [sic] your letter to President Arafat with my personal attention [sic] to give this issue his necesserry [sic] concern.

Please follow up with the President office [sic] regarding this issue and inform me of any help you may need; I will be at your disposal.

With my best wishes and regards,

Sincerely yours,
For: Ahmed Qurie (Abu Ala)
The Speaker
The Palestinian Legislative Council

In the near future the former Archimandrite Anthony intends to visit Washington, DC, in order to meet with several senators and congressmen to discuss the illegally seized property of the Orthodox Palestine Society.

Ordained by a Greek hierarchy to episcopal rank, the President of the Orthodox Palestine Society will retain his position, since the society is not an ecclesiastical but a secular organization and each section elects its own president.

THE CONSECRATION TO THE EPISCOPATE OF ARCHIMANDRITE ANTHONY (GRABBE)

On Sept. 30 in the Church of St. Irene Chrysovalantou in Astoria, N.Y. the consecration of Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe) was performed. For 18 years he had been Head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

Due to a number of complicated situations in years 1986-1987, Archimandrite Anthony joined the Greek old calendarist Bishop Paisios.

Several bishops who had arrived from Athens participated in the service. After the consecration there was a dinner (trapeza) in a parish hall which was attended by many faithful, among them the Russian friends and admirers of the newly consecrated bishop. There were several speeches and in his address Metr. Paisios mentioned Bishop Gregory who reposed a year ago.

All the celebrants in the service received a souvenir from the new bishop in the form of a "panagia" and he in turn received one from all the bishops.

Just a little over a year ago, Bishop Paisios belonged to a group of old calendar bishops with their administrative center in Athens. At that time their synod had 19 members, headed by Archbishop Chrysostomos. Unfortunately, in accordance with an unwritten Greek law, this hierarchy split into 3 or 4 independent groups.

In accordance with Greek terminology, metropolitans are considered to be regular bishops, while the title of "presiding archbishop" is equal to the Russian, Serbian, or Bulgarian "metropolitan".

Metr. Paisios belongs to the group presided over by Athanasios, Metropolitan of Acharnai and New Ionia. Besides him the following metropolitans belong to his synod: Anthony, Stephen, Justin and Vincent.

As is evident from the letter of the Holy Synod of Athens to the Metr. Paisios of North and South America, dated Aug. 29, 1996, this synod, after receiving his report of Aug. 24/ Sept. 6 decided:

"II. (Took into consideration) your request to declare the Holy Metropolitanate of North and South America semi-autonomous, and

III. (Honored your request) for the ordination of bishops who will contribute to the better carrying out of very significant missionary work.

After deliberation and assiduously weighing the needs and conditions that predominate in the area of your God-preserved diocese, we deem that no canonical impediment exists for the creation of the status you request."

This decision is signed by all 5 of the above named hierarchs.

In a circular letter to his clergy and presidents of various church organizations dated Sept. 10/23 the Metr. informed them that the Synod of the Old Calendarist Church in Greece (unfortunately, although about half of Greece adheres to the Orthodox church calendar, it has many such synods who do not recognize each other as legal) had decided to elevate the Diocese of North and South America to semi-autonomy.

In this letter by the first hierarch of the newly created semi-autonomous group there is something quite new for the regular ecclesiastical practice: the clergy and laity are invited to vote in the elections of new bishops. With the letter was enclosed a list of candidates and ballot forms to be cast.

It seems that Metr. Paisios himself is concerned that this voting system might prove scandalous because he explains that "this manner of election is absolutely consonant with the canonical order of the Orthodox Church as well as with our traditions because during the first years of the Church of Christ that was the manner of electing bishops."

One could leave this statement without a response if it were not known that in the ancient Church there existed some traditions which at the present time would be unthinkable to restore. For example, not just "during the first years of the Church of Christ" but even up to the beginning of the 5th century there were married bishops. Also, for several centuries there existed the rank of deaconess who were ordained by bishops according to a special liturgical office (now lost).

An attempt to restore the rank of deaconess was made by the Grand Duchess Elisabeth, but the Holy Synod in refusing her request informed her that too many centuries had passed to have this tradition restored. An attempt to restore married bishops was also made in the Russian Church (in 1918) and was labeled "renovationist".

CHANGES AT ST. SERGIUS ACADEMY

The Board of Trustees of St. Sergius Academy, NYC, at its meeting on Sept. 28th discussed the financial situation of the school. The founder and principal of the Academy, Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe) reported that after 37 years of administering the school, he feels he is unable to procure funds any longer for its continued existence. For the last two years the school has been experiencing a lack of funds, as is now usual for many private schools.

In order to save the school (which has a charter from Department of Education of New York State), unique in the Russian diaspora, Father Anthony approached a number of newly arrived Russian businessmen, asking them to assist the school with their donations. After several attempts, his request was answered by a group of Russian businessmen who agreed not only to pay the school's debts, but also the expenses of its continuing administration.

With this in view, Archim. Anthony asked the present Board of Trustees to resign and hand over the administration to a new board.

After detailed discussions and the resolution of a number of problems, Archm. Anthony transferred the administration to Dr. Nicholas Smirnov and his associates.

The text of the above information was provided to us by the former principal of St. Sergius Academy.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE CHURCH IN MOSCOW DEDICATED TO TSAR NICHOLAS

In our last (Russian) issue we published an appeal for help from the only church in Russia dedicated the Tsar Martyr Nicholas. The church is located in Golovine Cemetery in Moscow and its rector is trying hard to get a permanent lease to the building (which used to be a morgue) so as to enable the raising of a cupola with a cross. The parish has a small bookstore where religious literature, icons and small devotional objects are sold.

There are regular services with a small but very professional choir and the walls are decorated with icons in the traditional style.

This is probably the only church in Russia and abroad in which the ancient tradition is observed in which at the exclamation, "The doors! The doors! With wisdom let us attend," the church warden actually goes to the entrance doors and locks them from the inside. They are opened again at the end of the Eucharistic Canon with the singing of the hymn. "It is meet..."

This very old and necessary tradition is unfortunately not observed in our days not only in Russian, but in neither Greek, Serbian, Romanian, and other Orthodox churches as well.

Those who might be willing to assist this parish of some 50 members can make a donation through Church News.

AN ECUMENICAL CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The bulletin "Metaphrasis" # 31 (52) informs us that the Moscow Patriarchate in Minsk (Belorussia) initiated from October first to the third "an important interconfessional conference" titled "The Call to One Hope in a Unity of Peace" (or is it "in Union with the World"? In Soviet Russian the words "peace" and "world" are spelled identically. In pre-Soviet orthography there was a distinction.) As noted below, the representatives of Christian churches and organizations in CIS and the Baltic states were invited to participate.

Despite all assurances by the Moscow Patriarchate that it is liberating itself from the ecumenical heresy, there is no doubt, at least in this case, that it is the initiator of this gathering.

ONCE AGAIN ABOUT HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FOR THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The daily "Novaya Russkaya Slovo" ("The New Russian Word", a Jewish newspaper in Russian) in its issue for the weekend of 28-29 September printed information about recent humanitarian aid to the Moscow Patriarchate.

In July of 1995 the entire world learned of the scandalous letter of Patriarch Alexis to the President of the Russian Duma (parliament), Mr. Rybkin, asking that 200 tons of chicken legs be freed from customs duties so that the profits from the sale could be used to restore churches.

Now the same paper has published information about another Patriarchal letter, this time to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin, in which the Patriarch requests that the customs officials "be forbidden to process the forms for tobacco and alcohol products imported into Russia with the pretext of 'humanitarian aid' to the Moscow Patriarchate."

The Patriarch states that "the import of tobacco and alcohol products was done by circumventing the Committee for Humanitarian Technical Assistance of the Russian Federation according to employees of some of its departments. The Church considers the free import of these products as humanitarian aid unacceptable."

The paper also informs us that according to orders from the Patriarch there was an investigation which proved that "some people" have used the name of the Church "for unscrupulous purposes." As the Patriarch insists, the Church did not receive either the shipment or profits.

Considering the well-known corruption within the Moscow Patriarchate administration, it is quite obvious that those "some people" are their own employees. This confirms the impression that the real problem is that the Patriarchate profited little from this affair. "An investigation was made" as stated in the announcement and the abuse was uncovered, yet "the investigation of this incident will be continued". But to what end? To find out how much the guilty really pocketed?

A CASE TYPICAL OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The communist newspaper "Komsomolskaya Pravda" ("Communist Scout Truth") on September 10th published with malicious pleasure an article which it entitled "Women Riot in a Holy Convent."

As a certain Valery Krivoshein reports, "in order to crush the riot in a convent near Zadonsk, the Voronezh Diocese sent 50 holy fathers and militia of its own special services agency."

According to reports, a group of nuns under the direction of their spiritual father, in 1991 restored the ruins of St. Tikhon's Transfiguration Monastery. The efforts of the abbot of this convent, a Fr. Peter, the majority of the work was finished in only nine months. But, as is typical for the Moscow Patriarchate, the troubles of the monastery now began. Metr. Methodius appointed an abbess who very soon started fighting with the founder, Archim. Peter. The metropolitan asked that he, "at his own request be allowed to renounce" the spiritual leadership of the convent.

In response to this, the nuns defended their spiritual father and wrote to Metr. Methodius asking him to let them keep their spiritual father and deliver them from their abbess who, in their words, "promoted debauchery in their convent". A majority of the 110 nuns signed the letter.

As the newspaper notes: "the reply to this letter of the nuns was the descent of a holy commando unit upon the convent."

On September 3rd the monastery was besieged with cars in which the 50 priests and the militia were sent. First, they removed all the pilgrims from the monastery property, and then began "to crush the women's riot" with their usual methods. For seven hours the representatives of Metr. Methodius "held talks" with the individual nuns. Upon finding out that the nuns intended to call in the press, the diocesan secretary, Fr. Eugene, began to shout at them: "I'll show you what democracy and glasnost is!" At this point each of the nuns was required to swear on the Gospel that they would be obedient to any superior. Then the reprisals began. In the course of the suppression of the "riot", five nuns and Archim. Peter himself were taken by ambulance to the nearest hospitals. Three quarters of the nuns were chased off. Assisted by "father-bouncers" they were forced into cars, given 100,000 rubles (less than \$20) and their passports taken to the railway station. A portion of the nuns found refuge in the homes of nearby city of Lipetsk, but the majority of them were dispersed to four winds.

As the newspaper reports, the next day all was quiet and peaceful in the monastery and Fr. Eugene, when asked by the overly curious responded only that nothing special had happened. "There was a meeting concerning the acceptance of new constitution for the monastery. A handful of nuns disagreed with it and left the monastery." On the other hand, he could not hide his displeasure that the laity were interfering in church affairs when a factory in Lipetsk and some other businessmen who had made substantial donations to the restoration of the monastery wrote to Patriarch Alexis supporting the nuns and Archim. Peter.

Most likely, nothing will come of this protest and the patriarch will just shelve the whole matter as he is accustomed to doing according the age-old customs of the Moscow Patriarchate.

This outrageous tale is sadly all too typical of the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate.

METR. PHILARET OF MINSK ON A PAN-ORTHODOX COUNCIL

According to the "Ecumenical News International" of September 18, Metr. Philaret of Minsk, Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Belorussia gave an interview to the Italian paper "L'Avvenire" in which he declared that "the whole Orthodox world" believes it necessary to convene a council which would "reckon with current problems" and clarify Church teachings (?!). Yet he pointed out that at the present time out of 15 autocephalous churches, not one of them would be able to organize such a meeting on the required scale.

Metr. Philaret asserted that Orthodoxy at present is divided by "internal hostilities" as a result of arguments over canonical authority and jurisdictional rivalries within individual churches. He mentioned the schism in the Bulgarian Church which suddenly has two simultaneous patriarchs, and also the conflict between the Moscow and Ecumenical Patriarchates over the question of the Estonian Church.

Among all the Orthodox Churches, the Russian Church has the most members (estimated at 70 million), followed by the Rumanian Church at 20 million, the Greek at 9.025 million, the Serbian and Bulgarian, each having some 8 million faithful. Then come the churches of about 20 thousand and ending with the autonomous Sinai Archepiscopate with only 900 members.

Metr. Philaret believes that an "ecumenical council" might resolve any existing problems, or at least "point towards methods of resolving them." The project of such a council was last discussed at the island of Patmos and as well in Bucharest in 1995.

A representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the World Council of Churches in Geneva gave a favourable reaction to Metr. Philaret's statement, yet he recalled at the same time that the question of convening a pan-Orthodox council has been under discussion by the ecumenists for some 30 years. The delay in summoning a council arises from "the unwillingness of many local Orthodox churches to tackle the issues raised in pre-conciliar pan-Orthodox conferences. These issues include things like a permanent date for celebrating Pascha (April 15th), remarriage of clergy, married bishops, reducing fasting periods to a minimum, and similar innovations.

Some ten years ago, one of the ecumenical activists admitted openly that a pan-Orthodox council could not be convened at present because the vast majority of Orthodox faithful are not ready to accept the proposed "reforms".

A NEW TRICK BY THE VATICAN

As reported by the Serbian church newspaper "The Path of Orthodoxy" for the month of September, the Vatican issued "a virtually revolutionary document" as it was characterized by the Maronite Chor-bishop John Farris, the vicar general of Uniate Diocese of Brooklyn, "because it is a very clear statement on the part of the Apostolic See that the Latinization [of the eastern rite] has been completely abandoned." (The title Chor-bishop is a rank lower than vicar bishop -- somewhat equivalent to monseigneur -- and is a ploy by Roman Catholic hierarchy to insure total control of Uniate bishops.)

As is well known, in those areas where Uniatism has flourished (especially in Poland and Czechoslovakia), not long after it had been introduced, the Roman Catholic bishops began to demand Latinization of all the Uniates. In some regions the lay Uniates fought to keep their old Orthodox traditions and the Latinization did not gain momentum. But in the areas where Catholicism met with less opposition, the results of Latinization were very blatant.

This document from the Congregation for Eastern Rite Churches runs to 95 pages and instructs the Uniates that "in every effort towards liturgical renewal, the practices of our Orthodox brothers must be taken into account... as a result, they must be respected and made to depart from them as little as possible, so as not to widen the existing separation."

The Uniates are now ordered to commune infants immediately after Baptism and Chrismation instead of deferring these sacraments to ages of 8 or even 10 years. They are likewise to abolish the confession booths introduced by the Roman Catholics or the use of confession rooms separate from the main church. One can presume that the Roman Catholics are now prepared to permit a married clergy for the Uniates, which previously had been persecuted by any available means.

Of course, the new Vatican regulation has nothing less in mind than to lure Orthodox laity, who are insufficiently knowledgeable of their Church's teachings, into the Roman Catholic-Uniate heresy. The Uniates by mimicking the externals of Orthodox liturgics will be taken for Orthodox by many.

Nevertheless, regardless of the attempts of the Uniates to imitate the Orthodox, the results of Latinization -- inculcated over the course of 400 years -- will not be that easy to erase.

A SCHISM IN THE BULGARIAN CHURCH SEEMS TO BE NEARING ITS END

"Ecumenical News International" of August 21 reported that the synod of Patriarch Maxim intends to announce the excommunication of Metr. Pimen and his clergy at the beginning of Lent in 1997. This decision was made last July.

Patr. Maxim (like some other Soviet patriarchs) was appointed to his post by the communist government. In 1992 Metr. Pimen, who is 90 years old, together with 6 other bishops demanded that he retire in view of his appointment by

secular authorities. In return, the Patriarch, who is 81 years old, defrocked Metr. Pimen and his entire episcopate and clergy. In this action he was supported by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Metr. Pimen, for his part, did not recognize the validity of this decree and in this manner a schism resulted within the Bulgarian Church that persists to this day.

In the early part of July 1996, the followers of Metr. Pimen elected him Patriarch in the church of St. Parasceva in Sofia. Twelve bishops participated in the ceremony representing the 12 dioceses of Bulgaria. The enthronement was performed in the presence of Philaret Denisenko from the "Ukrainian Patriarchate of Kiev", the only non-Bulgarian "hierarchy" who supported Pimen.

As has been reported, Tsar Simeon who visited his former kingdom during the months of May and June, received a special blessing from Patr. Maxim, while ignoring Patr. Pimen and his followers.

A spokesman for the Bulgarian Patriarchate, Marin Zarbanov, said that although the Chief Prosecutor and other prominent officials supported the rebel clergy and still do, these officials never showed any interest in restoring church property seized by the communists. Zarbanov expressed the opinion that after the excommunication of Patr. Pimen his movement will quietly disappear.

In principle, one could sympathize with Patr. Pimen on the basis of the 30th Apostolic Canon which forbids the appointment of bishops by civil governments, but his recognition as "patriarch" by such an odious person as Philaret Denisenko undermines any confidence one might have in him.

ARAB COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCHATE

The official publication of the Antiochian Patriarchate "The Word" published in its October issue a very long statement by the "Task Force to Support the Orthodox Christians in Jerusalem." The meetings of this Task Force were held from May 2 to 5 in Chicago under the chairmanship of George Madanat and arrived at eight separate resolutions.

Resolution One states that the Task Force's goal is a "rejuvenation of our Church of Jerusalem and preservation of Orthodoxy in the Holy Land, so as to bring it back into uniformity with the teachings and traditions of our Holy Orthodox Church and to implement all resolutions of our first... conference held... in Pennsylvania, May 12-14, 1995."

Resolution Two "calls upon all Arab political leaders in the region to stand firm and accept nothing short of the restoration of the national interest of their Christian Orthodox Arab citizens in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem" and to "endorse the legal action initiated by the Orthodox faithful in Galilee and the other communities against the unjust appropriation of church property by the Patriarch of Jerusalem."

Resolution Three states that all Arabs have to unite in order to "rid themselves from the yoke of the corrupt hierarchs in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Without such action the rejuvenation of the Church in Jerusalem and the restoration of its holy mission will not be possible."

Resolution Four declares that "the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre was organized for the sole purpose of protecting the Greek interests in the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and this uncanonical organization has fostered Greek supremacy in our Church, thus creating a de facto schism in our Holy Apostolic Church of Christ... The Task Force strongly condemns this uncanonical organization composed of a group of imported monks calling themselves the 'Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre' and calls for its immediate dissolution."

Unfortunately Greek chauvinism is rather obvious and widely known as such. Those who have had the good fortune to visit the Holy Land quite often hear the bitter Arab complaints that the Greeks isolate themselves from everybody, in no way conduct pastoral work among the Orthodox Arabs, who under their very eyes are lured away by Catholics and other sects using mercenary means. In many respects the Arab complaints have a good foundation. For example, no Arab according to a tradition from time immemorial is admitted to the episcopate nor even membership in the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre, which is headed by the Patriarch himself. These complaints have a long history. The Task Force recently republished a short book critical of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre that was originally written in 1893 by Bishop Raphael Hawaweeny under a pseudonym. However, to speak of the uncanonicity of the Jerusalem Patriarchate is very wrong. And all the more so from a group of representatives of the Antiochian Church which is the most affected among the "Orthodox" Churches by extreme ecumenism and modernism.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the Arabs would not sell all the holy places to whatever heretics they fancied, or even worse. Sadly, depending on the Arabs in a matter of such importance to the entire Orthodox world would be unwise.

A MEETING BETWEEN THE ROMANIAN PATRIARCH AND A CATHOLIC CARDINAL

The Roman Catholic journal "Thirty Days" # 6 included a notice informing its readers of a meeting between Patr. Theoktist and Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Justice and Peace Council, which took place in Bucharest. This cardinal also chairs the "Committee Preparing for the Great Jubilee of 2000."

At this meeting the Cardinal invited the Patriarch to participate in those festivities.

The Romanian Patriarchate very happily responded to this invitation and her spokesman declared that the meeting was a "historical landmark" in the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Vatican. The Roman Catholics characterized this meeting as giving "positive signs for an ecumenical dialogue with the Romanians."

DEALS BETWEEN ANGLICANS AND LUTHERANS

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of September 18 reported that there was a conference of spiritual leaders in Trondheim, Norway, which was attended by clergy from the British Isles and northern Europe. On September 1 they signed the Porvoo Agreement which concerns the union of these two groups. This agreement received its name from the city of Porvoo in which the first draft of such an agreement was drawn up in 1991.

According to this agreement the Anglican Church of Britain and the Lutheran churches in the Scandinavian and Baltic countries will have interchangeable ministries and enter into full eucharistic communion. At this already eucharistic gathering 25 bishops, 5 archbishops and more than a thousand laymen took part. In this service the head of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury Carey and Bishop Andreas Aarflot of the Lutheran Church of Norway both participated in "communion."

It was expected that 10 Anglican and Lutheran groups would sign the agreement, but only 9 did so. It is expected, though, that the Lutheran Church of Latvia would sign it in the future.

In his welcoming address the Archbishop of Canterbury Carey joyfully announced that the "relationship between Lutherans and Anglicans around the world are, at present, a particularly fruitful area of ecumenical encounter." A whole series of short speeches by representatives of various "churches" followed his. The Primate of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Richard Holloway describing the role of a bishop in the church said: "We are too fond of intricacies of address and title...; we are too bound to the badges of office." After the service ended, speaking at the reception, Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation declared that the Agreement of Porvoo was a "theological breakthrough" and is "an invitation and a challenge to us all to overcome our sometimes 'sanctified' separate denominational loyalties "

Similar "eucharistic meetings" are planned for September 8 in Tallin (Estonia) and November 28 in London.

Before departing for England, the Anglican Archbishop Carey said, "I want to make it clear that the Anglican Communion is absolutely committed to the continuing work of theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church."

Similar unity on an equal scale is planned between Lutherans and Episcopalians (that is, the Anglicans) in the USA.

As was reported in "The New York Times" of October 15, there was a week-long convention of 66 Lutheran and 156 Episcopalian bishops in a hotel in Mt. Pocono, Pennsylvania. There measures to secure strong ties of cooperation between these two religions were discussed. It was proposed that the two churches enter into a full eucharistic communion. According to this proposal clergy of one denomination could serve in the parishes of the other. Also, the churches could combine their funds for charity work, while they all could commune at each other's churches.

This plan, termed a concordat, has been in the works for 27 years. The bishops on both sides have as yet not voted on this plan. Instead, this summer in Philadelphia there will be two separate conventions of both denominations in order to finalize the agreement. Both groups see in it a series of advantages: Episcopalians and Lutherans can use the same church buildings, and in places requiring charity work both can join their efforts. The Episcopal Bishop Christopher Epting mentioned that in Iowa he has a poor parish which cannot support a pastor, but there is a wealthy Lutheran parish in the neighborhood which could help.

But this kind of union raises not only questions of a material nature. Episcopalians have bishops and priests and even claim an apostolic succession. Lutherans do not have this kind of hierarchical structure. Only in 1960 did several Lutheran groups unite and install bishops. The Episcopalians intend after the unification is realized to have their bishops participate in the ordination of Lutherans and in this way they would gradually attain legality. Likewise laymen who "preside at the Eucharist" among Lutherans would be ordained by Episcopal bishops. It seems that the Lutherans see no obstacle to this and the Lutheran Bishop Anderson declared that "we are cautiously optimistic."

FAMOUS ATHEIST DISAPPEARS

The paper "The Boston Sunday Globe" of September 15 reported that in August 1995 the most famous atheist in America Madalyn Murry O'Hair disappeared without a trace. In 1965 she obtained a court decision to stop prayer in the public schools. Her being a professional lawyer was no small help.

A woman of 77 years, she had been ill for some time. Nevertheless, she never ceased to fight against God. Now she is succeeded by a certain Ellen Johnson who became president of the 40,000 member organization of atheists. It has been speculated that the godless O'Hair escaped to Tahiti with their 100 million dollar fund. Some think that she died because she did not participate in an demonstration of atheists in New York in 1995.

One of her sons is a fanatical atheist, while the other, formerly atheistic, renounced his mother and joined some fundamentalist Christian sect and is making an effort to restore voluntary prayer to schools.

This obnoxious godless woman repeatedly declared that what she fears most of all is that Christians would pray for her when she died!

DIFFICULTIES FOR CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL

As reported by the bulletin "Ecumenical News International" on September 25 in connection with the Arab uprisings in Israel, its government closed the borders of the occupied West Bank as well as entry to Jerusalem for all Arabs from there. As a result, at a time when the Christian private schools were due to begin classes, more than 150 teachers were not able to come to their classes and some of the schools were forced to close.

A Roman Catholic priest, Noujaim, who chairs an ecumenical group of private schools in Jerusalem declared that "our educational programs are in disarray... The problem has gone from bad to worse and our children's education remains at a virtual standstill." Father Noujaim, who represents the Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Orthodox private schools, met with Prime Minister Netanyahu and asked him to take measures to permit the teachers to enter Jerusalem.

The Prime Minister expressed concern and promised to help, but further appeals to different Israeli government departments produced no results.

UNEXPECTED EXPANSION OF THE MORMON SECT

"The New York Times" of October 11 reported an unexpected growth of the Mormon sect not only in the USA but worldwide.

In spite of the utterly fantastic teachings of this sect, which in fact have very little to do with Christianity, it has become a widespread phenomenon. The majority of Mormons, who number about 10 million, live outside the US. Just in the period between 1980 and 1990 their membership grew by more than 2 million members.

This sect was established in 1836 by Joseph Smith who became their so-called prophet. Besides the fact that they gather genealogical information on all the deceased of every religion in order to "baptize" them and in this manner "save their souls," the Mormons accept polygamy while prohibiting the drinking of alcohol, tea or coffee and smoking. Their rituals are derived from Masonic rites.

This sect is extremely wealthy since its deceived members are required to tithe their pre-tax income. To leave this sect is difficult, if not almost impossible. They never publish any figures on how many have defected.

The Mormons subvert their victims by sending out for propagandizing well-dressed, clean cut and polite young men.

The main object of their veneration are their temples upon which they spend huge sums. It has been estimated that the average Mormon temple costs them about 18 million dollars. Only members of the sect are admitted within them and for outsiders this is impossible. Only prior to their "consecration" and when no rituals are being held can one gain entrance to see them.

Unfortunately the Mormons have been having some successes in Russia.

ISRAELI POSTAGE STAMP IN THE USA

The newspaper "The Jewish Press" of October 18 informed their readers that in 1996 the American Postal Service will issue a postage stamp commemorating the Jewish holiday Hanukkah which commemorates the miracle when a vigil lamp in the Temple burned for 8 days instead of the expected 5.

A short time ago the Jews considered this holiday a minor one, but during the last few decades they began to emphasize it in order to counterbalance Western Christmas when Christian children would receive gifts while the Jewish none.

The future stamp (with Hebrew or English inscriptions) will show burning ritual candles and be 32 ¢.

This is the first time both institutions (the Israeli and American postal services) will issue a stamp simultaneously. On October 22 in a special ceremony at the Israeli Knesset the stamp was presented by officials of both postal services to President Weizman and Prime Minister Netanyahu, while in the US a similar ceremony occurred in Washington at the Adas Israel Congregation with Postmaster General Marvin Runyon presenting an American version of the same stamp with the Israeli ambassador present.

The Jews constantly assert that they are an insignificant minority in every country. In Yugoslavia it was said of them figuratively, "those are the ones who don't exist!"