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CHRIST IS RISEN!

"Church News" sincerely greets its readers on the bright day of Christ's Pascha wishing that all of you may greet it with spiritual joy and good health. Those readers who kindly took the time to greet us for the Feast we thank for thinking of us and return their salutation with a joyous, "Truly He is risen!"

With this fourth issue (No. 60) of Volume 9 (which is the sixth issue in English) we repeat that we would not like to send anyone unwanted literature which might clutter up their mailbox. So we request that if you wish to continue receiving "Church News" in English please write to us in that regard, and please remember that both the Russian and English versions exist only on the basis of the voluntary support of our readers. We will gratefully accept any donations to cover the costs of publishing, mailing and maintaining subscriptions to our various sources.

A CORRECTION: In the previous issue (# 59) in the first article entitled "From the Life of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad -- Further details about the betrayal by Archbishop Mark" the first sentence, which explained that Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston had been ejected from the ROCA, should have read in English "was ejected... by means of alleged violations of basic canons..."

CHURCH NEWS
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PASCHAL EPISTLE OF THE PRIMATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Beloved children of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in diaspora and those within the expanse of Russia:

Christ's Pascha has always consoled us and will console with the waves of God's grace which descend from the wide open gates of the Kingdom of Heaven. All will feel them and they will come to everybody and highlight his face with the pure joy as is an icon by a vigil light. It will not by pass any, will not avoid any: those who fasted and those who did not fast, those who prayed and even those who did not pray. It will touch everyone. Some souls it will fill to overflowing, so that they will not know where they are, on heaven or on earth, to boldly paraphrase the Apostle Paul, and another it will quietly touch, as if by tender wing, just slightly, but from such a touch, he will feel from head to foot God's Paschal Grace with joyful trembling and he will wake up and his spiritual eyes will open toward the light of a new life and he will never forget it throughout his lifetime.

Therefore, we will not repeat the annual Paschal expression of best wishes for you. Better for us to be quiet, we and you. It often happens that in such Paschal quietness there is more power and significance than in the noise of our feeble words. Here one can recall the words from the Akathist to the Mother of God:

"Rejoice, thou faith of those who pray in silence!"

Truly Christ is Risen! --

-- your sacred answer is being heard. One will not hear it with the ordinary ear, but the whole creation, animate and inanimate, trembles with it and the sun plays with it, carrying it through the fields, forests, tundras, jungles, deserts and seas, in order to include the whole universe in it. This is what our wonderful Pascha is!

Just now I have joyfully exchanged Paschal kisses with you, however, our archpastoral conscience and duty compel us again to turn to words: to admonitions, teachings and warnings. In front of our eyes, suddenly, quite unexpectedly, stands a mysterious revelation of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist, St. John the Theologian: the APOCALYPSE. It seemed to us to be distant from us by many centuries, as a prophecy which certainly at some time will come to pass. But suddenly it not only stands at the door of our contemporary life, but antichrist's sharp, icy, freezing draft blows threateningly through our earthly planet. So what is this APOCALYPSE? According to the Holy Fathers, the interpreters of this sacred book, the Apocalypse is a book about the last years of the earthly history of Christ's Church. In it is shown an indissoluble connection between the fate of the Church and the fate of the whole human race and the entire cosmos. So what is Her fate in our days? She, the Church of Christ, is constricted. The majority is displeased with her. She is hardly tolerated. She is laughed at. She is defamed. They did not succeed in annihilating Her and will not succeed. And now all the dark powers try to get within Her and, like termites, eat Her from the inside leaving only an empty shell. The evil laughs into our face. And we frivolously run after the shadows of earthly goods, after our supposed good reputation, asking only not to be disturbed, not to have our comfortable life disrupted. But we will face, definitely face, a great temptation. We will be put on the knife-edge of life. No one will be able to hide: there will be no crack; everyone will be found and hear a fatal, tragic question: are you "with us" or with CHRIST? Maybe they will not ask in this manner, for fear of alarming the unlucky Christian, but will ask simply: are you "with us"? So what should we do? First of all, we must understand in what ominous and accountable times we live in. Then, place ourselves within the frame of prayerful discipline: pray morning and evening. Pray with the Jesus Prayer wherever and whenever possible. Take Communion more often in the True Church and not in an empty shell of the church. No one will be saved at that time by a diploma of theology, nor a knowledge of liturgics, not by the rank of bishop, or priest, nor any rank. A man's soul will be saved only by a personal and heartfelt love toward our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and by faithfulness to Him even unto death. Did not the Lord Himself prophetically say: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) And at the same time, the Lord promised indestructibility to His Church to the very end of this world. And this means that even until the time of the Second Coming Christ's Church will be very small to the extreme; there will be one or two church buildings in which there will be given the True Body of Christ and the True Blood of Christ. In other churches there will be left only an empty shell, very well decorated on the outside, yet empty. See that ye walk circumspectly, "because the days are evil" (Eph. 5: 15-16). "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22: 20).

Nevertheless, regardless of the extreme darkness of Antichrist, even unto the last earthly Pascha of Christ, they will cry aloud throughout the entire world:

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

Amen.

Pascha, 1997

Metropolitan Vitaly

PASCHAL EPISTLE OF ARCHBISHOP VALENTINE OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR

To the God-loving Flock of the Russian Orthodox Free Church

CHRIST IS RISEN!

Throughout the entire length of Great Lent we all have visited the church of God, elevating the prayers within our power to God the Lord asking forgiveness of our sins. We sincerely believed and hoped that the Lord hears the groans

of our souls, hears our tearful cries, hears our repentance for our sinful lives, hears our desire to start a new life, a saintly one with God in accordance with the Evangelical commandments. After all, the purpose of Christ's coming to us on earth is to cure our souls, darkened by sins, to save them and to return them to God.

The Lord gave us life on earth in order that we worthily prepare for everlasting life. He established fasts and prayers in which we, as in a bath, can wash away our sins and imperfections so we can enter the Kingdom of God pure and immaculate, enter it in a state like that in which the Lord God created us. The Lord granted us the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church which is for us the gate to the kingdom of glory and to everlasting life.

The great mystery of Paschal joy is for us a small reflection of paradise, and the weakness and fragility of this joy in our hearts is an alarming sign of the fragility and weakness of our inclination towards it.

O Lord, we know that our strengths are slight because we are aware of our weakness, but God is strong and we seek Him, we love Him with all our heart and thoughts. We rest upon Him all our hopes, remembering: "let no one lament his sins, for forgiveness hath dawned from the grave; let no one fear death, for the death of the Saviour hath liberated us."

We sincerely believe that the All-merciful Lord, the Holder of Life and Death, will hear the cry of our fallen souls and will make us now worthy to walk with burning candles through the darkness of midnight around the church while singing: "Thy resurrection, O Christ Savior, the angels hymn in the heavens. Make us on earth worthy with pure hearts to glorify Thee."

Beloved in the Lord, fathers, brethren and sisters! We all see that our Lord Jesus Christ, in the last days before His Second and Glorious Coming to earth, opens wide and triumphant the doors of His chamber so that our weak spiritual powers could endure the contemplation of what the Lord has prepared for those who love Him.

I sincerely greet all of you and your families with the bright and all-joyous Feast of Christ's Resurrection. May the resurrected Christ strengthen your hearts in the difficult days to come. May He grant you the prudence and the discernment needed for your own salvation.

So let us exalt the glory of Him Who is resurrected from the dead, Christ the Life-giver, and with pure hearts sing the bright hymn of victory: "Christ is risen, because in Him is our joy and our victory! Christ is risen, and the demons are fallen! Christ is risen and the angels rejoice!"

Christ is risen! Truly He is Risen! Amen.

Valentine, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir

Pascha, 1997

A MIRACULOUS FRESCO IN THE MONASTERY OF ST. NICHOLAS ON THE ISLAND OF ANDROS (Greece)

In the St. Nicholas Monastery church on the Greek island of Andros, next to a painted icon of St. Nicholas is a fresco depicting the Theotokos surrounded by angels, holding on Her lap the Christ-child.

More than 10 years ago a nun brought to the abbot of this monastery, Fr. Dorotheos, a large bouquet of white lilies, which he placed beside this icon of the Mother of God. These lilies wilt, but have never dried out. Every year by the middle of June the stems of the lilies are covered with pearl-like drops, some of which become leaves and some turn into flowers. These miraculous lilies never stop blooming until the beginning of October, when they wilt in order to bloom again in June.

Some 5 years ago, tears began appearing on this icon, first on face of Mother of God, then on the figure of Christ and later on those of the angels.

This icon has become quite well known due to many miracles. As a result, one Anna Anterier, a doctor from Marseilles (France) came to pray before it. She was ill with cancer and doctors considered her condition totally hopeless. She came to Andros with her mother to pray before this icon to be cured. Both women zealously prayed to the Theotokos and then retired to the monastery's guesthouse for women and went to bed. The mother of this ill woman had already fallen asleep, when her daughter saw a figure in monastic garb and wondered why Fr. Dorotheos was appearing in her room? Looking again, she then thought it to be a nun, but then realized it must be the All-Holy Virgin. She jumped out of her bed to venerate Her, at which moment her mother woke up. Anna Anterier felt immediately that she was cured and both women hurried to the abbot to inform him of the miracle. After a thanksgiving service, they returned to France, were baptized there and now out of gratitude are building in Marseilles a Greek Orthodox church.

A CLEVER TRICK TO CHANGE THE ORTHODOX PASCHALION

The question of altering the Orthodox Paschalion has been raised repeatedly for at least 25 years. By persuading the trusting Orthodox people that the celebration of feast of Pascha in common with all the heretics will serve the unification of all Christians, the ecumenists initially offered to fix as a Pascha celebration day the 2nd Sunday in April. But this proposal encountered such strong protests from the faithful and even from new calendarists, that the ecumenists in the Ecumenical Patriarchate had to admit that "the faithful are not yet ready" to accept this reform. Now, the very same question has been raised again, but in a slightly different, more cunning, form.

According to information published by the bulletin "The Sentinel" for May, in the Syrian town of Aleppo from the 5th to the 10th of March a conference was organized by the World Council of Churches and Middle East Council of Churches, attended by representatives of a whole number of Christian denominations. At this conference a new plan to change the Paschalion was proposed. A rather extensive report was published by the "New York Times" in its "Beliefs" section on March 29th, 1997.

Stating that Pascha should be celebrated in accord with the First Ecumenical Council, on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the vernal equinox and that this regulation may not be disturbed -- but at the same time trying to by-pass it -- the ecumenists have invented a cunning move. In 2001 the dates of the Orthodox Pascha and Western Easter coincide. The Aleppo Conference decided that this is a very convenient moment for establishing a Paschalion common to all "Christians." As is known, the Orthodox and Western Churches use the same principle to calculate the date of Pascha, but due to different calendars, the designation of the spring equinox and the first thereafter full moon happen to be different. In addition, the Westerners make no stipulation that their Christian Easter follow the Jewish Passover and make no correction in cases when the Jewish Passover comes too close or too far from the Christian Pascha. Therefore, the West quite often celebrates its Easter long before the Jewish Passover, as happened, for example, this year when they celebrated almost a full month prior to the Jewish Passover.

According to the Aleppo proposal, the most distinguished astronomers will calculate for everyone a new Pascha date ("the most accurate", of course) in Jerusalem basing it upon "the meridian of Jerusalem, the place of Christ's death and resurrection" and which "would allow East and West to circumvent old battles between the Julian and Gregorian calendars" and must be implemented by all in order to effect the world-wide union of Christians starting with the year 2002.

The World Council of Churches plans to send out soon its proposal to all the Orthodox and other Christian Churches. Enclosed will be a genuine Orthodox Paschalion and the ecumenist proposal with a chart showing the number of days' difference between the two of them. According to this scheme (if the Orthodox Paschalion is used) -- in the first 20 years 13 of them will be quite different from the Western one, while if the present Western Paschalion is used -- a difference in the same period will occur only in one year.

While trying to persuade us that "the difference in dating Pascha" has no theological significance, the ecumenists have had to admit that all the attempts to raise this question have led only to schisms. They also had to admit that this question is much more complicated for the Orthodox, as it mostly concerns them and therefore "there will be need for great pastoral sensitivity among church members as the proposal is pursued" if this proposal is to come about.

The members of this impious gathering included: the Anglican Communion, the Armenian "Orthodox Church", *the Ecumenical Patriarchate*, Evangelical Churches in the Middle East, *the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch*, the Lutheran World Federation, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, *the Moscow Patriarchate*, the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Seventh-day Adventists.

This conference was hosted by the Antiochian Patriarchate. Representatives of the "Orthodox Church in America" and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada were sent as consultants.

The article from "The New York Times" has a significant sentence near the end: "Obviously Orthodox leaders would have to emphasize to their faithful that such a change was being made out of faithfulness to Nicea and not as a surrender to the Western tradition."

ONE HAS TO DECIDE (Original headline)

The newspaper "The Express Chronicle" from April 3, 1997, under the above headline published the following interview given by Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir to correspondent L. Semenov.

Corresp.: Your Eminence, how do you feel about the decision made in February of the current year by the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to depose you?

Archbp. Valentine: I consider this decision to be one made by sectarians with whom some time ago I was in communion.

Corresp.: The Church which you rule is called "free." Probably this is explained by the fact that for many years the Russian Church was in captivity, rather one should say, in voluntary captivity?

Archbp. Valentine: For thirty years I served in the Moscow Patriarchate. All these years I was, like every parish priest, kept under vigilant surveillance by the bureaucrats of the Council for Religious Affairs as well as by bureaucrats of the ROC: church wardens, deans, a bishop. For example, many times I recommended worthy young men for entrance into ecclesiastical seminary, but I always received a denial. "The organs" [of state security] would not permit it. Here is one more example: I and my brethren in the Faith once went to Diveyevo (at the time Diveyevo was in ruins) and served there a panikhida on the grave of blessed nun Alexandra Melgunov, for which I and my fellow travelers were detained, a complaint was made and sent to the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs Zinoviev in the Vladimir Region. He strongly reprimanded me and warned that if something of that sort were to happen again, I would be thrown out of the church. My experience in the Moscow Patriarchate verifies that this organization was founded as a sort of military

barracks, and those who serve in them are powerless serfs of the government and church "generals." At that, both these and other administrators who live in such full agreement and union, have become related in spirit to the structures [in which they find themselves].

Corresp.: How did you decide to come over to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which ROC calls "the Karlovci schism"?

Archbp. Valentine: It was in 1989, at the dawn of perestroika. It was clear to me than that in spite of changes in the political situation, no changes were possible in the ROC. So I left the Moscow Patriarchate without any regrets and without any fear. It is possible that this was connected with the beginning of my spiritual path: in my childhood and youth I was raised by clergy faithful to the Church of Patriarch Tikhon. As we know, the Patriarchate was restored by the Local Council in the tragic days for Russia of 1917-1918. The Council made the most important of decisions, as a result of which it was possible to establish a free Church exactly at a time when it was being threatened by the cruelest captivity. One part went off to serve the Soviet government, another happened to be abroad, and the third went underground -- into the catacombs.

Corresp.: What did you have to undertake in order to return to the path of church freedom?

Archbp. Valentine: I started with repentance and called my parishioners to the same. It was difficult for us. We have been constantly kept under surveillance. We were accused of being enemies, schismatics. Every sort of slander was thrown at us! And yet, I felt confident: it did not weigh upon me. Repentance liberated me from the burden of my sins and torments connected with my many years of service in the ROC. "One has to decide," the righteous St. Seraphim of Sarov used to say, when he was asked how one can start a new life in Christ. Christ is liberty. "Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," we read in the Gospel (Lk.8: 32). This commandment is given to every person and Church, whose glory is not in a bishop, not in a patriarch, not a human being, but in Christ.

Corresp.: Yet your path in the Church Abroad also happened to be not an easy one?

Archbp. Valentine: I did not see right away that the part of the Russian Church which happened to be abroad is subjected to the same illnesses as the Moscow Patriarchate. Our separation from the Church Abroad is quite understandable. Its leadership not only did not wish to return to Russia, but also to understand Russia, to understand and relive with mind and heart the path she went through. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) existed too long in a world foreign to her. In that world, which is as godless as the Russian world subject to the Bolsheviks, the bishops of the ROCA continually created some false images of Russia: they either perceived her as "Holy Russia" or as for them an incomprehensible and dangerous country. Declaring Russia to be a "missionary territory," they did not want [to go there] to missionize in it. One cannot guide from America a Church which seeks liberty after long captivity. This is the reason why we could not find unity with the ROCA. Before even it was sealed, our temporary commonality started to fall apart drastically, especially after their functionaries started to support marginal societies of neo-nazi/fascist and pseudo-monarchist movements. Odious organizations, of the type like "Pamyat", led the hierarchy of the ROCA (incidentally, to the delight of the Moscow Patriarchate) into many errors and losses, which were connected, I repeat, with a lack of knowledge of the situation in Russia. It is possible that someone specially guided those actions which compromised the Church Abroad. And when I expressed my opinion openly at a press conference of the impossibility of a union of the Church with those of nationalistic and fascist pretensions to Orthodoxy, I made enemies also in the ranks of the ROCA. This was the beginning of our separation. Besides, the bishops of the ROCA wanted to exert power over Russian parishes no less than their colleagues in the Moscow Patriarchate. This is why not many parishes decided to leave the ROC. And their path was as difficult as the path of the Suzdal community. Slander, oppressions, attempts to take away churches, litigations, assaults...

Corresp.: How do you explain that the hostile parts of the Orthodox Church (the ROC and the ROCA) were united in regard to the Russian Orthodox Free Church led by you?

Archbp. Valentine: The journey of the Church in a godless world has been such a long one, whether in communist Russia, or in democratic America, France and Germany, that it has led to a destitution of the religious conscience, to spiritual incapability of Orthodoxy. This was supported by the wish, no matter what, to find a comfortable existence. In this manner Orthodoxy (as a religion) was transformed into ideology. As far as the reason why the Free Church was not received by the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Synod Abroad is concerned, this is explained by an equal lack of spirituality in both of them.

Corresp.: And so you became an "objectionable" archimandrite to the ROC and "objectionable bishop" to the ROCA. Do not you see here a wish to sacrifice you so these structures can find a way to come together?

Archbp. Valentine: No, a coming together is still far off. Here one can rather see an ignorance of the canons of the Church. Deposing me happened through a crude violation of the Church rules. I was not invited to attend the ecclesiastical court hearing. In the Moscow Patriarchate such an organ in general is non-existent because from the time when Metropolitan Sergius usurped power there ceased to be any canonical life. The Church was run by the atheistic powers. A court was not necessary. When my case was decided in the ROCA, they also did not want to hear me in the court. Both Churches in the present situation exist in "canonical lawlessness." And many misfortunes of our Fatherland are connected exactly with this lawlessness. It destroys the purity and faithfulness to Christ which was handed down to us.

Corresp.: So, what is the way out?

Archbp. Valentine: The history of the Church knows many cases of unlawful reprisals against bishops. Let us remember St. John Chrysostom, who was deposed as a bishop; the persecuted St. Athanasios the Great; St. John of Damascus; the Metropolitan of Moscow, St. Philip. The Church and her servants who seek to live by Christ's truth will be always be persecuted. But, ever, so long as this world stands, the victory is Christ's and not of those who seek to use His Name for unlawfulness. One has to start with repentance. The bishops of the ROC have to acknowledge their betrayal of Christ in their collaboration with the Chekists [KGB] and Communists. But I believe the time will come when the truth will triumph over the lies by figures in the Moscow Patriarchate -- and the government, which is seeking spiritual support from this organization, will understand that Russia is tired of lies. no matter from whom they come: a President or a Patriarch.

PROTESTS AGAINST OPPRESSION OF THE ROFC BY THE GOVERNMENT

Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir for four years has been lodging appeals to receive some buildings of the Risopolozhensky (The Laying Down of the Garment of the Holy Virgin) Convent in Suzdal and also a church of Sts. Boris and Gleb in Kideksha.

As can be seen from a letter of Archbishop Valentine to the Head of Administration in the Vladimir Region, Mr. Vinogradov, dated Feb. 8, 1997, # 24, the local authorities informed him that "it is not possible to resolve a question" in regard to the handing over of some the buildings of Rizopolozhensky Convent to the Diocesan Administration of ROFC," although no explanation was given for the refusal in the letter of the Administration. And as far as the Sts. Boris and Gleb Church is concerned, a Deputy Head of Administration stated that because this church is an "object of historical and cultural inheritance of nation-wide importance and has to be under protection as a monument important to the state...we consider that handing it over for use as a church to be ill-advised."

"The monument under state protection" is in a ruined condition and, of course, no one is admitted to this "museum treasure"!

In trying to gain from the authorities the exact reason for the refusal of his application to get the churches he applied for, Archbishop Valentine made an effort to personally approach Mr. Vinogradov with assistance of the Head of Administration of Suzdal, Mr. F. E. Illarionov, who in his turn informed Vladyka, that Mr. Vinogradov has no time to meet with him in the near future.

Archbishop Valentine then turned to another local authority, Mr. B. Alexandrov and he informed him that the desired meeting could take place with the condition that the diocesan Bishop of Vladimir, Archbishop Evlogy, of the Moscow Patriarchate, also be present. As Archbishop Valentine writes to N. Vinogradov, "it was explained that until ROFC finds a 'common language' with Archbishop Evlogy, there is no way any churches and monasteries can be given over to him "

In his letter Archbishop Valentine asks Vinogradov, "Can there be a state religion in a lawful democratic state, and at the same time because of their unwillingness to be subordinated to it the faithful, who have guaranteed constitutional rights, therefore have no chance to obtain the church or monastery which was built by their ancestors of the same faith? Does the concept of "patriot" necessarily require a "certificate of quality" issued by Archbishop Evlogy or Moscow Patriarch Alexis Ridiger?"

Then Archbishop Valentine complains that "not only we are not given the convent, but they want to take away from us even those churches which were restored by the Suzdal Diocesan Administration of the ROFC without any assistance on part of the state: the Church of St. Ephraim the Syrian in the village of Omutskoye and the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky in the village of Ves in the Suzdal Region. Some 300 million rubles were spent on their restoration already, and now Archbishop Evlogy attempts to expropriate them by the way of intrigues at the offices of the local administration."

After a month had passed without receiving any satisfaction on the part of local authorities, Archbishop Valentine and members of the Synod of the ROFC on March 3, 1997, approached the representatives of the State Duma of the Russian Federation with an "Open Letter." Unfortunately, the length of this excellent letter does not permit us to publish it in full.

The bishops complain to the Duma delegates that the ROFC not only doesn't enjoy the rights and liberties guaranteed by the constitution to all citizens, but on contrary, it was met, and continues to meet, with "a resistance by the bureaucrats *on all the levels of government.*"

This is "manifested by the creation of a multitude of obstacles or direct refusals by the regional and local departments of justice to register the by-laws of the religious communities comprised of members of ROFC on the pretext that the ROFC is a 'schismatic church' since it is not under the jurisdiction of Moscow Patriarchate."

Another justification given is that the bishops of the ROFC are "deposed" by the Moscow Patriarchate or the Church Abroad. At the same time they promise that "the transferal of an community into the bosom of the Moscow Patriarchate would quickly solve any registration problems. There are numerous testimonies to this in the files of

dioceses of the ROFC. All of this is a direct violation of the Constitution and laws of the Russian Federation "on freedom of religion (Articles 4, 6, 8, 10 and 15)."

The ROFC Synod then lists a number of examples of seizure of churches and houses of prayer under their jurisdiction with the participation of the police and courts, while the Moscow Patriarchate receives from the government churches and monasteries, sometimes even without requesting them.

In the 5th point of the Open Letter, the ROFC Synod of Bishops complains that "the Moscow Patriarchate is granted the rights of an 'official' Church." In connection with this she has unimpeded access to the state mass media, declaring herself to represent the faithful of all Russia and expressing their interests, "sanctifying" by her presence almost all important state events. This is both out of place for the state, which declared its separation from the Church, as well as being contradictory to the law of the Russian Federation "concerning freedom of religion" (Articles 6, 8, 10).

"All of the above mentioned violations of the rights and freedoms of the citizens are not local or episodic, but have a constant and ubiquitous character."

"This last year has been marked by participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in wine and tobacco import, the export of oil and Yakutia diamonds, duty-free trade, speculations on the stock market, in banking, *which are categorically forbidden by the church canons and contradict the civil statutes for religious organizations.* This illegal activity of the Moscow Patriarchate, having nothing to do with religion, is conducted with the full negligence (or tolerance) of the government."

"What is said above testifies to the fact that in our country there exists an unlawful alliance of persons, close to the government, who can avoid investigations, manipulate the press, the courts, arrange intrigues in parliament, on the one hand; and on the other, persons who in the not so distant past had secret ties to the penal organs of political investigation."

And the first, due to their all powerfulness and impunity, and the second, due to a secrecy which veils their past, while having the similar goals of preserving and securing their positions in power and society, in the most cruel manner suppress the efforts of anyone to act outside the course of their interests and policies. Quite obviously, this group consists of people who stand *above the law.*"

This group of people, which built the Moscow Patriarchate into a mighty organization, which now has her own punitive agencies, establishes banks and controls not a small part of the criminal economy, this group of people, in violation of all rights and liberties, in contradiction to the law -- gives priority over all other religious organizations to its favorite child. Moscow Patriarchate is called the Russian Orthodox Church, the Mother Church and is identified with the pre-Revolutionary Orthodox Church and Church of Patriarch Tikhon. But, actually, it was the destroyers of former Russian state, these ferocious enemies not only of monarchy, but of everything Russian, nationalistic, these haters of Holy Church and Patriarch Tikhon (he anathematized them twice), these church reformer-renovationists, who after the destruction of the legal Russian Orthodox Church, in 1943 established the present Moscow Patriarchate. Is there a need to say what a terrible danger to our society, to the whole Russian nation, is the existence of an organization of such mighty power and yet outside the control of the laws of society?

"The Russian Orthodox Free Church has in her midst a portion of the catacomb Christians of Russia who never belonged to the apostate Moscow Patriarchate and through the years of persecution remained faithful to the pre-revolutionary Church and the Church of Patriarch Tikhon. In other words, the ROFC has an uninterrupted Church tradition. This cannot be said of the Moscow Patriarchate which was established in 1943 and only a few years ago was forbidden even to mention the name of St. Patriarch Tikhon, because of his "counter-revolutionary stand..."

Talk that the ROFC is "new", "recent", "untraditional" and so on has per se no foundation and is a self-justification by the Moscow Patriarchate. The ROFC was registered in the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation after the publication of the law on freedom of conscience, practically, simultaneously with the Moscow Patriarchate."

The letter of the Synod of Bishops of the ROFC concludes with the appeal: "We ask you, respected representatives of the people, to pay special attention to above mentioned violations of the rights and liberties of the faithful and *demand from the government* through the appropriate agencies of the State Duma *the immediate abolition of all the privileges which the Moscow Patriarchate enjoys at the expense of faithful of the Russian Orthodox Free Church.*"

This letter was signed by the Presiding Bishop of the Synod of Bishops of the ROFC, Valentine, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir; Theodore, Bishop of Borisovo and Sanino; Seraphim, Bishop of Sukhum and Abhasia, and Archpriest Andrew Osetrov, Secretary.

AN EXCELLENT APPEAL

"The Church and Society Herald" # 9 (a supplement to the paper "Russkaya Mysl") published "An Appeal of the Bishop of Vladivostok and Primorye, Benjamin, to the Council of Bishops in 1997 in name of the Church's children, monastics and clergy of the Primorye Region."

This, rather long "Appeal", three full newspaper columns, actually presents a critique of the basic points of Metropolitan Yuvenaly's very long report which he presented to the Council of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate regarding the canonization of Imperial Family. Basing its decision upon Metropolitan Yuvenaly's report, the Council

again (how many times now?) postponed its final resolution until the next Local Council of the ROC, the exact date of which is still undetermined.

Metropolitan Yuvenaly found no reason to canonize the Tsar-Martyr and his Imperial Family. Although he is willing once more to discuss the spiritual level of martyrs whose sanctity he claims became manifest only during their imprisonment and death and he is ready in the end to acknowledge them only to be "passion bearers."

There is no need to say that Metropolitan Yuvenaly's report is actually another slander of the entire *podvig* (spiritual struggle) of the Tsar-Martyr and his Family and therefore the avoidance of their "glorification" -- for which there exists a strong demand from the faithful -- by the Moscow Patriarchate is one more insult to the memory of the Imperial Family.

Bishop Benjamin puts the whole question on the right Church-oriented rails and it is amazing that he was able to evaluate the *podvig* of the monarch's service in such a fine manner, of which he says: "The heir to the throne Nikolai Alexandrovich, as a 16 year old youth began his cross-bearing path of suffering when he took the oath to faithfully serve his Father, the Autocrat, and the Fatherland on May 6th, 1884. The Orthodox Church and people with one mouth at that time expressed the common zealous prayer: *"May the Lord strengthen the young soul of the Firstborn and Heir in the sacred vows of his great ministry, assigned by the will of God; may He instill in his heart and mind His truth and wisdom and may God's grace overshadow him, which enlightens and strengthens every good intention and right action."*

After briefly describing the *podvig* of the Tsar-Martyr, Bishop Benjamin writes: "For God and for the Church triumphant in Heaven, by Whom the Royal passion-bearers were long ago glorified, the formal canonization of Emperor Nicholas II Alexandrovich and his Imperial Family, as was proposed by the Synod's Committee, is not important. It is important for us the militant Church on earth because it clarifies our hope and expectation in which rank do we invoke the Great-Martyr Tsar for the help of suffering Russia."

It is amazing that in the ranks of the rotten Moscow Patriarchate there happens to be a bishop courageous enough to be unafraid of stepping forward against the general policy of Patriarchate in this particular question. But how wonderful would it be, if he would find within himself enough courage to stand against its treacherous ecumenical policies. After all, that is a question concerning the essential dogma of the Church and certainly, it is of greater importance than the question of the Tsar's glorification.

"APOCALYPSE COW"

Using such title, the "New York Times Magazine" of March 30th published an article about livestock. In a short foreword it says that among the thousands of livestock waiting to receive their ribbons at the recent Dixie National Junior Livestock Exhibition in Jackson, Miss. were also five heifers, belonging to 41 year old Clyde Lodt. These animals face triple scrutiny. The judges look at them only as "beef on the hoof". But to the Christian Lodt, with his affection for the Holy Land, it is also an opportunity to feed the country he fell in love with. And as far as Rabbi Haim Richman is concerned (he is to come at the end of spring to meet with Lodt), one of his heifers might play an important role at time of coming of the Hebrew Messiah.

Lodt traveled to various places in Palestine, visited Damascus and throughout studied local cattle-raising. He is sure that his heifers, of the "red angus" breed, are of a much better quality than those in Israel. In the Old Testament Jews were ordered to bring to the temple for purification rituals a "red heifer" (Numbers 19: 2).

The question of rebuilding the Third Jerusalem Temple is a very contemporary one. In 1990 in Jerusalem a "Temple Institute" was established in which pure gold articles (specially reconstructed according to old manuscripts) which were required for the Jewish sacrifices and purification rituals are being stored. There are also on display specially made ritual vestments for a high priest and priests. As one of the founders of this Institute declared that if the Messiah were to come tomorrow he could find in this Temple Institute all that is needed for conducting a service. As the Jewish representatives stated publicly on several occasions, they have more than enough money on hand to rebuild their temple. The only obstacle is that on the foundation of the former temple there stand two mosques, one of them the huge Mosque of Omar. The Israeli government is reluctant at present to start an merciless war with the Arab world, which would be the result if they were to touch those mosques.

Lodt, after he developed his red angus cattle, out of love for Israel informed Rabbi Richman, who is considered to be an important expert at the Temple Institute in this field. He visited Lodt in America on several occasions and it seems that the deal between Lodt and Israel is already closed.

CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

"The New York Times" of April 3 published a large article about Christianity in Japan. It was brought to that land by a Catholic, Francis Xavier in 1549. As was customary for Jesuits, in the beginning he preached that it is possible to worship Buddha simultaneously with Christ. After he gained strength he started to preach Christianity, i.e., Roman Catholicism. After a few decades of work by Catholic missionaries, they had gained some 300 thousand followers. However, General Hideyoshi, who united Japan in the 16th century, soon started to persecute Christians and in 1597

killed 26 of them. The center of persecutions was Nagasaki, which became widely known for its atrocities against Christians. They were crucified, tied up in bags and thrown into the sea, or steeped slowly in boiling water and executed in an especially cruel manner: the martyrs were suspended upside down in a hole, half-filled with excrement, a light cut was made on their foreheads and they were left to bleed to death. Tradition tells us that even one hour of such a torture was horrible, but some martyrs hung there for days before they died, still not renouncing Christ. In addition, the torturers often left one hand untied, so that the martyrs could save themselves by lifting only a hand to be immediately released. Perhaps those martyrs made up for their unwitting heretical baptism with the baptism of their own blood shed for Christ. It is a pity, that their names are not known to us.*

A portion of the Japanese Christians, without renouncing Christ, went underground and the government celebrated its victory, thinking that after several centuries, Christianity had been annihilated. Yet it was discovered that at a rather short distance from Nagasaki, there is a tiny island Ikitsuki, a reporter of the Times spoke with one of its inhabitants. He related, that in 1622 on this very same island Kinshiro Ichinos was beheaded for Christ, who predicted that a time will come when Christianity will spread over Japan. Some 50 thousand Japanese there remained Christians, although due to the passage of time their Christianity radically changed.

The reporter, Nicholas Kristof, talked with the local pastor and found out that he has in his home an altar to Buddha (by the way, he hides his Christianity even now), and he said: "I have a Buddhist altar and Shinto shrine in my house. In the old days that was just for camouflage, because our Christianity was hidden, but now I believe in the other gods as well."

A majority of contemporary Christians also have two religions. When someone dies, a public Buddhist funeral is held and then the Christians secretly have a Catholic or Protestant one. As this pastor said: "After the Buddhist funeral is held, we tell our god that it was all a mistake. And then we hold the Christian funeral and sing Christian hymns."

On this little island there is a place known as the Mound of a Thousand Corpses. Thousands of Christian martyrs were buried there, whom the ancient Japanese decapitated and buried the heads separately from the bodies in order to prevent possibility of their resurrection.

In the middle of the last century Japan opened its borders and gradually became more tolerant of the faith and by now it permits full freedom of religion. To the great surprise of this journalist, on this once Christian island, there are still baptized Japanese, but by now they have no religion whatsoever and occupying themselves with greed, and enjoying contemporary technology and comforts.

For some reason he makes no mention of all the Christians converted by St. Nicholas of Japan. Doubtless, the journalist (probably of Russian or Bulgarian decent) never heard that martyrs' blood is the seed of the Church.

Note: Before publishing this article, on the premise that we know the Church's teaching that the sanctity of a martyric confession can be recognized as holy only within the fold of the Orthodox Church, we put the following question to three respected Russian priests:

Can we consider pagans, who were converted to Christianity by Roman Catholics, to be truly holy martyrs provided that those pagans had never heard of the existence of the Orthodox Church, yet were beheaded for their faith in Christ?

All three priests unanimously concurred that since such former pagans suffered for Christ's sake and not for the defense of the Papacy, one can consider them to be true martyrs.

One of our readers had some doubts about the correctness of this line of thought which can lead one into the dangerous realm of recognizing as saints all kinds of heretics who believed themselves to have suffered for Christ's sake. Therefore, out of concern lest we scandalize any, we addressed this same question to very authoritative Old Calendarist fathers of a monastery in Boston for their opinion. Being of the view that rejects the possibility of sainthood outside the fold of the Orthodox Church in cases of martyrdom, they considered a definite recognition on our part of such would be an anticipation of God's Judgement.

A CONFERENCE IN GRAZ (Austria)

The bulletin "Ecumenical Press International" from March 26th states that from June 23rd to June 29th there will be an Ecumenical Conference at which the main speaker will be Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu who fought apartheid in the South Africa.

Participants will be: the Conference of European Churches (CEC), the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops, all sorts of Protestant and Anglican "Churches", some "Orthodox" and of course, the Moscow Patriarchate.

At the opening of this Assembly on June 23rd, the main speakers will be: "Patriarch Alexei II, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, one of the world's biggest churches, and Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, Archbishop of Milan, who has often been mentioned in the press as a possible successor to the Pope."

The main theme of this Assembly is "Reconciliation -- Gift of God and Source of New Life."

It is considered that this Assembly will be the most well attended and important in Europe of these few past decades. Eight thousand participants are expected, 750 of whom will be delegates.

The General Secretary Jean Fischer declared that "we wanted to show by the choice of speakers that reconciliation is a universal theme. When we look at our situation in Europe, we should not forget the examples of reconciliation which have taken place in another parts of the world."

Organizers expect to have 83 different events and the hall for the meetings should be able to accommodate 1000 people.

ONE MORE INTERESTING CONFERENCE

Our Editorial Office received a newspaper clipping, unfortunately from an unknown newspaper and without a date, stating that in St. Petersburg between January 26th and 29th there was a conference hosted by the Educational Center of the Academy of Science, with a very puzzling name: "Theology after Oswencim and the GULAG and its relationship to Jews and Judaism in the Orthodox Church of Bolshevik Russia."

As one can see, the Moscow Patriarchate even today can not rid itself of various "theologies" which were formerly forced upon it by the atheists. It seems, that "habit is second nature."

The article relates that "the conference is organized by the High School of Religion and Philosophy with the assistance of the St. Petersburg's Union of Scientists, the St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy and Seminary, a scientific information center, "Memorial", an international center for Christians and Jews and also religious organizations from Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands."

The Director of the Conference, Natalia Pechersky, said that "The idea of this forum is supported by the St. Petersburg's Diocese and that it will be opened by Vladimir, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg and Ladoga, himself.

The representatives of the ROC and different religious representatives will also participate in the work of this conference. This is not counting the scientists, war veterans, inmates of concentration camps and, of course, of "the ghetto."

According to the idea of its organizers, "the conference has to become a first public declaration of the Russian Orthodox Church regarding problems with promoting Judeo-Christian dialogue and should also promote the overcoming of misunderstandings by Orthodox Christians in Russia of the Western experience regarding those problems and by Western Christians and Jews of the experience of the Russian Orthodox Church."

It is very strange to speak about "the first public declaration of the representatives of Orthodox Church" regarding relationship with Jews after the scandalous appearance (known to the whole world) of Alexis Ridiger himself before rabbis of New York in November of 1991! Besides, at the end of the very same year of 1991, the Head of the Department for Foreign Church Relations, Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk made a public, widely known declaration to the foreign press about beginning a dialogue with the Jews which will proceed "with the representatives of a very high level."

As always, the Moscow Patriarchate is lying, while selling out Orthodoxy and hiding this tragic fact from the Orthodox Russian People.

EFFORTS TO CONVERT AGIA SOFIA INTO A MOSQUE

The newspaper "Orthodox Observer" of March 20th published by the Greek Archdiocese in North America reported that the Turkish government, which time and time again attempts to convert the former Church of Agia Sofia in Constantinople into an acting mosque, recently raised this question once more. Yet the government this time met with the opposition from an unexpected side.

The Turkish ministry of culture demanded that the church-museum be closed on Fridays and suggested, it should be open for tourists on Mondays. The President of the Union of Tour Guides in Istanbul (Constantinople) Ahmet Sensilay declared that "apart from reasons put forward by the ministry for the change, both public and international opinion will consider it the first step towards converting Agia Sofia into a mosque."

"In all civilized countries museums are closed on Monday and Tuesday or Wednesday or Thursday, which are days on which tourist movement is much smaller than on Friday, when there is a large turnout of visitors. If Agia Sofia remains closed on Friday, the one million tourists visiting Istanbul will only have the possibility of visiting it on Saturdays, thus creating huge problems for the building."

Unfortunately, the results of this protest so far are unknown.

ABOUT THE "TURIN SHROUD"

In connection with the recent fire in the Catholic cathedral in Turin, from which the "Shroud" was saved, in the media and press there again were a lot of discussions regarding its authenticity. The "Bergen Sunday Record" of New Jersey from April 13 published in connection with this an AP article of opinions given by Israeli scientists. This piece of linen was triumphantly brought to the Turin cathedral and laid out for veneration in 1578.

Just a few years ago the Vatican permitted radiocarbon tests to be made on this cloth by three different laboratories and all of them, quite independently, dated this "shroud" as being from 1260-1390.

The Israeli scientists supplement the laboratory data in support of the forgery theory. Their main point is that there is not a known case of cloth preserved for 2000 years in a humid climate. Such cases can be found only in the deserts. Then the Israeli scientists point out that this cloth, which is 14 feet long, does not correspond to the manner Jews wrapped a body in a burial shroud. In addition, they state the lengths of the imprints of the body on the cloth (front and back) differ: one is shorter than other by 6" (15cm.). Archeologist Joe Zias also stressed, that the ancient Jews did not wrap the head, while on the "Shroud" there are marks of the "imprint" of the Saviour's head. From the Gospel we know that after the Resurrection of Christ, there was found a "napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself" (Jn. 20: 7). Similarly the napkin is mentioned in Gospel in the case of Lazarus resurrection.

An archeologist at Jerusalem's Rockefeller Museum and an expert on ancient methods of crucifixion, Zias said that the imprints of the hands on the Turin cloth (pierced by nails) also do not correspond to reality. In order to keep the body upright on the Cross, the nails were driven through the wrists and not the palms of the hands, which is where he claims, they are seen on the Shroud.

Ancient icons of the Crucifixion of Christ present Him with the palms of the hands pierced, not heavily hanging as in Roman Catholic pictures, but with outstretched hands, to symbolize the Crucifixion was of His own free will.

Archeologist Zias praised the "courage" of the Vatican in permitting radiocarbon testing of the cloth and even said, that it probably could serve as an aid to believers. "But if they take something from the 14th century and say it comes from time of Jesus, I feel scientists have a right to speak up."

Orthodox tradition nowhere mentions the Shroud of Christ as being preserved until our day.

A COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE UNDER RELIGIOUS COLORS

"The New York Times" in its Sunday issue of March 9 published two full pages describing the story of recognition by American authorities of an commercial enterprise known as "The Church of Scientology."

A certain Ron Hubbard established this company in 1950. He was a professional writer, who published science fiction, while also using texts from the Holy Scriptures. In 1957 he was exempted from paying taxes as "The Church of Scientology in California."

However in 1960 the IRS discovered a whole series of violations on part of this "church" and saying that this is an commercial enterprise, serving private interests, the Internal Revenue Service revoked Hubbard's and his "parishioners'" church tax exemption privileges.

In 1977 the Federal Investigation Bureau (FBI) unexpectedly raided the Scientology headquarters and confiscated documentation which showed that a whole network of those parishes "received an instruction 19 pages long which contained directions how to sabotage the work of the IRS against the scientologists. At that time, the wife of Hubbard was arrested and jailed."

Then the Church leadership came to the conclusion that in order to restore their status of a "Church" they have to find "soft spots" among the employees of IRS in America. Their efforts paid off in 1993 when the IRS informed them that 150 of the Scientology churches and missions are exempt from taxes.

This war by a commercial company, which strove to receive a status of a Church, lasted for 25 years and ended in its victory. It was achieved through the hiring by the "church leaders" of whole group of private detectives who spied on the personal lives of important employees of IRS and then simply blackmailed them.

This "Church" was outlawed in Germany and Greece for the very same reason: a commercial company trying to pose as a Church.

"ACTS OF GOD"

In connection with the natural disasters which plagued America last year (fires, floods and tornadoes) in the state of Arkansas, where there were specially from vicious winds, the State Legislature presented a bill that would help people who suffered from storms. A draft of this bill read that this was as a result of "acts of God."

Governor Mike Huckabee, at the same time an Baptist minister, demanded that this text be corrected because this "would be violating my own conscience, insomuch as it described a destructive and deadly force as being an act of God." He offered as a correction to substitute the words "acts of God" with "natural disasters."

The bill was presented to the House of Representatives which refused to remove the words "acts of God," but added to it "or natural disasters."

A State Representative, Democrat Dennis Young, said: " We've used the term 'act of God' in insurance since there has been insurance -- before there was insurance."

Finally, the Governor/minister in a written statement declared that "I feel that I have indeed witnessed many 'acts of God', but I see His actions in the miraculous sparing of life, the sacrifice and selfless spirit in which so many responded to the pain of others."

Such is contemporary Christianity!

FROM THE EDITORS:

We received a request from "The Herald of the True Orthodox Christians" to publish information about their magazine. In principle, we do not publish any advertisements, but as an special exception we are willing to publish the following:

"For the first time 'The Herald of the True Orthodox Christians' is publishing "Russian Orthodoxy." We have already put out 5 issues of this publication and an extensive addition (52 pages) to the issue # 4, which is dedicated to the history and ecclesiology of the Greek Metropolitan Cyprianos, the Russian Orthodox Church and Catacomb Church in Russia. The cost of the entire set is \$10.00. To order, write: Russia, 196084, St. Petersburg, P.O. Box 402, Ms. N. A. Yurina. (In Russian the address is as follows: Россия, 196084, г. Санкт-Петербург, а/я 402, Н. А. Юриной.)