



CHURCH NEWS

AN INDEPENDENT PUBLICATION OF ORTHODOX CHURCH OPINION

November-December, 1997
Vol. 9, No. 11 (67)

Republication permitted upon acknowledgment of source

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CHURCH NEWS
639 Center Street
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THE FUNERAL OF THE GUARDIAN OF THE MYRRH-STREAMING ICON, JOSE MUÑOS

On Wednesday Nov. 12 in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville a burial service was performed for the reposed guardian of the Myrrh-streaming Icon of Holy Virgin of Iveron, Jose Muños Cortes, who was murdered on the night between October 30 and 31st.

The funeral service was set to begin at 1:30 PM. At noon the monastery offered to all those who had come for the service a *trapeza* (common meal). Due to lack of space, although both of the monastery's refectory rooms were used, 5 additional tables were set up in a nearby building.

Shortly before the beginning of *trapeza* it became known that Archbishop Laurus would permit the casket of the deceased to be open during the service. Many admirers of martyred Jose rushed over to the church. His body, in accordance with international laws, had been transported from Greece to Canada, and then from Canada to USA in a plastic bag. When the bag was opened at the order of Archbishop Laurus, it was discovered that there was no odor of decay from the body despite the fact that 12 days had passed from day he was murdered. This greatly surprised the undertaker.

The entire body of the deceased was of a dark color (black and blue). His face was so injured that the undertaker had to use some make-up. His wrists bore definite traces of torture. It seems, that the killers tied his wrists with very thin wire so that it cut through the flesh right to the bone. On one of his hands skin was torn out the size of a US quarter.

Archbishop Laurus presided over the funeral, with 18 priests concelebrating along with 5 protodeacons. No less than 20 more priests stood in the church which was filled to capacity. For this sad occasion admirers of the reposed came not only from different parts of America and Canada, but also from Europe. In particular, the abbess of Lesna Convent, Macrina, came accompanied by one nun. Jose's family was represented by his sister. His aged mother, who recently was ill, could not attend the funeral due to the emotional stress caused by the tragic death of her son.

Everybody was sadly bewildered by the apparent ignoring of the funeral of the guardian of the miraculous Myrrh-streaming Icon by the First Hierarch of the ROCA, Metropolitan Vitaly.

The excellent Monastery and Seminary choirs greatly adorned the service with their singing. The service itself proceeded in an unusually prayerful mood and with no hesitations.

Before the parting with the deceased an excellent eulogy was delivered by Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov. He expressed the thought that one has to interpret the vicious murder of Jose as the devil's attack on an object that is so dear to the Church and on the continuous chain of miracles which attracted believers as well as unbelievers to the saving Church. Fr. Valery pointed out the amazing humility and modesty of the guardian of the miraculous icon. During all these 15 years no one ever saw him standing at the front. He would remain standing unnoticed in the back of churches among the parishioners. The majority of his friends did not know that he had more than 50 godchildren.

When the time came for approaching the coffin for the last time, due to Matushka Potapov's efforts, leaflets were handed out with a short biography of Jose and copies of the miraculous Icon. Many returned to the coffin to touch them for a moment to the body of deceased. Also some took flowers from the coffin and even managed to cut pieces from his shirt. Resting against the coffin's cover were many icons and in addition small icons and crosses were placed on the body which were gathered up just before closing the coffin.

When time came to carry out the coffin, the sky turned blue and the snow stopped.

Jose was laid in a grave close to the cemetery chapel and while the coffin was lowered, whoever was close enough took some flowers from the wreath which had lain on the coffin in the church.

It has been supposed that the murderer (and there is a possibility that there were several) tortured Jose, trying to find out where the icon was, which this time he had not taken with him.

Just four hours before his martyr's death he telephoned the man with whom he shared his apartment and told him that in the morning he would be leaving, but that he had a very troubling feeling something would happen and asked him to pray for him specially hard.

While parting from a priest acquaintance in the cemetery, a professional photographer from Switzerland was heard saying: "Next time we will meet at the glorification!"

TWO LETTERS FROM RUSSIA

The editors of "Church News" received from Russia two letters written by Abbess Seraphima, the Mother Superior of the Convent of St. John (Maximovich) in Suzdal, addressed to Metropolitan Vitaly, the First Hierarch of the ROCA and to Abbess Juliana, the former Mother Superior of the Mt. of Olives Convent.

Mother Seraphima is in a real sense a confessor of the faith. Her father, for his loyalty to Patriarch Tikhon, suffered beatings during countless interrogations and died as a consequence of them. Mother Seraphima herself, because of her refusal to accept the Sergianist "declaration", was sentenced to be shot, but then "pardoned" and re-sentenced to 25 years of labour in a concentration camp. She spent most of her life in the camp and was released

sooner because of an amnesty. Her sisters also perished because of their loyalty to Patriarch Tikhon. Her letter to the Metropolitan reads as follows:

Your Eminence, Vladyko Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York, the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Bless.

I am writing to you as the Superior of the Convent of St. John Maximovich in Suzdal, the unworthy Abbess Seraphima (The Russian Orthodox Free Church).

Some time ago, while still under your *omophorion* as first hierarch, I wrote you in the name of many sisters of our former Catacomb [Church] community addressing your Eminence with words of gratitude and support. Although I never received an answer either from you or from the Synod you chair, we always hoped that our Vladyka Metropolitan knows and prays for us. This is probably my very last letter to you. I write so that you would be roused from this terrible dream in which you are now, so that maybe you still can direct the helm of the already sinking ship of the Church you head toward the saving harbor.

I do not presume to teach you, holy Vladyko, but am just expressing the hopes of many, many people who believed in you and perhaps still do. I write this in memory of my parents who did not accept Sergius' declaration and my father who was killed during interrogations only for being loyal to Patriarch Tikhon. When we -- together with my two sisters were incarcerated and I was sentenced to be shot, later commuted to 25 years in the concentration camps -- we lived with the hope that there, abroad, there were still people, and there was a Church, which was praying for us and was strictly preserving the Orthodox faith which once existed in Russia.

Forgive me, Vladyka, but when I received information that you still beguile yourself with the hope that Hebron's sacred places will be returned. I now dare to say that you do not know your enemy, the Moscow Patriarchate, nor do you fully understand with whom you are dealing. However, is the Moscow Patriarchate still an enemy in your eyes?

We, here in Russia, have known them too well for some time: yet, when not long ago, some 3 years ago, you hurried to inform the authorities in Russia that you have nothing to do with the Russian Orthodox Free Church, the Moscow Patriarchate very quickly reminded us who they are. The believers in some of our parishes experienced in full measure what the truncheons of the OMON [police] are like, the injuries, bruises, blood, the smashed cameras, the KPZ, the lawsuits and grief over our sanctuaries taken away in churches which had been restored by our own hands from their ruins. You do not know what the life of the Russian people is like. We have been so filled with Communist promises that we now suffocate as a result of their blatant lies. Robbers! Destroyers! Russia has been destroyed and robbed. All the treasures of Russia are obliterated. Churches trampled down. The faith ripped up. The Orthodox people -- the genuine, the best, the wise -- rot in jails and exile. Annihilated, killed. But those [who did this] were the vicious enemies of Russia, the atheists and haters of the Orthodox faith.

But how do you, Your Eminence Vladyko Metropolitan, treat you spiritual children, who trusted you, who entrusted to you their lives, their souls, seeking from you salvation for themselves and for their children?

You have betrayed not only Abbess Juliana with her sisters and brethren, who in our lukewarm times showed us an example of Christian confession of faith. In her person you have betrayed (I speak only about Russia) all those who suffered for their faith: some who already stand before the Lord, others who still suffer from persecutions and those, God knows, who may be martyrs for Christ in some not too distant future. How could you permit your child to be exiled, who laid down her soul for Orthodoxy? You did not support her, did not help her, but punished her and on top of that apologized for her before the persecutors of Christ's Church. How crude! How unchristian! How could you do it?! Thus pleasing and imitating whom? -- heretics.

We heard of this, we read, we were very grieved and we were ashamed for you, Holy Vladyko. The City of the Lord is the ground on which Our Lord's Feet walked. It is where our Lord shed His blood, suffered for us, where He said that we are to expect persecutions and martyrdom. But you, as a hierarch of the true Orthodox Faith, permitted the utter trampling upon the holy City of Jerusalem -- of such Christian sacred places as Abraham's Oak, Gethsemane, Mt. of Olives and other places, and permitted yourself to be demeaned before the godless by punishing God's servants who boldly, courageously and faithfully kept the commandments of their spiritual fathers. Now you have handed over the destinies of these people to the learned master -- Archbishop Mark. How he gained his spiritless and soulless learning from his Soviet colleagues, we know. And what he could gain from them and how he will now apply his "knowledge" in the Holy City, we can also very well imagine. Also you yourself, holy Vladyko -- according to your letters which you have sent him accusing him of a close relationship with the heretical

MP and warning that Archbishop Mark is on the edge of a spiritual abyss -- seem to understand what can be expected from this archpastor. Or do you want many to fall along with him into this abyss? You have entrusted the affairs in Jerusalem -- a place where at present there is an intense battle with the Moscow Patriarchate, if you will, a battle of the Church with antichrist himself, who is to be enthroned in the Holy City -- you have directed there a person who is doing everything possible to achieve a rapprochement with the very same false Patriarchate. The heretics are taking your Jerusalem, the Holy City, from your hands. And you are supporting them. You yourself are encouraging them. Are not you afraid to lose also the Jerusalem on high?

Unfortunately, the way you have dealt with the Abbess Juliana is not a unique case. I will speak of what I, a sinner, personally witnessed.

There was no greater joy in my life, holy Vladyko, than when I, with my sister and brother Catacomb Christians, entered the Lord's temple, where ectenias commemorated your name, so dear to our ears and when, from distant Belgium to Suzdal for the first time, without any fear, but freely and openly in glory our Russian bishop came -- Vladyka Valentin. We have read his *gramata* [proclamation] of installation, with your most precious signature affixed. You cannot imagine with what unrestrained force we rushed to this candlestand which you have established "on the top of a hill" in ancient and God-preserved Suzdal -- we, all of those who had been waiting for this moment for many years, both those who did not want any longer to lie in the filth of the Moscow Patriarchate and those who just had started to know about Christianity. And all these people saw not only the deeds visible to all such as the restoration of churches, newly opened parishes, an active church life, not only received warm affection and total assistance, but above all they saw the strength and sincerity of the faith of the bishop of Suzdal and the people who surrounded him.

How much did we want, Vladyko, that you should come to Russia, to Suzdal, to see everything with your own eyes and to understand everything. But you declined everything, because your ears were turned toward the slanderers. And you, in the simplicity of your heart, believed them instead of accepting as a father your spiritual child who came to you seeking help, seeking your love for your birthplace, homeland and Orthodoxy. That was, indeed, in the spirit of the *ukazes* [decrees] of Patriarch Tikhon, which you did not fulfill. And we see now that, to the joy of enemies, you have betrayed us and our hierarchy. You are ready to believe anything that is whispered to you by the protégés of the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop Mark, Bishop Evtikhy and the others. Or maybe you are not free, as we are? We know those who dispose you against the Diocese of Suzdal and the Lord knows them too. We know them according to their deeds. They were here -- we have seen them. They are afraid that Vladyka Valentin will become your first and beloved child. Their satanic jealousy was such that they decided to suspend him. In this way you have undermined not only Vladyka Valentin, whose hands you have cut off, but you have done it also to all Orthodox Christians in Russia, who place in you their great hopes as a helper and defender of Orthodoxy. You have gravely offended us by excommunicating us from you and in this way you have pleased the Moscow Patriarchate. You have trampled upon our Orthodox faith, you did not help to restore it, but left it in ruins.

How could you, hierarchs who are inspired by God, who accepted consecration, your rank, from the Saviour, how could you go against Orthodoxy? Is it possible, holy Vladyko, that even now you do not see that those who introduced a split between our hierarchy and the Synod have turned away from you? Where are "Pamiat", Serge Perekrestov, Averianov, Ivankov, Ousachev and the others? They are there -- where sooner or later you will be led by Archbishop Mark and Bishop Evtikhy -- in the embrace of the Moscow Patriarchate. Your relationship toward the Moscow Patriarchate is not clear to us. You, holy Vladyko, say that it is without grace, but Archbishop Mark says that it is grace-bearing. Then make an conciliar decision regarding this matter, if the former regulations are no longer considered as acceptable.

We, when we spoke of outrageous violations of canon law by the Moscow Patriarchate, were always sure that in the Church Abroad they are strictly respected. But what has actually happened? The Synod and Council of Bishops of the Church you are heading frequently and blatantly violated the canonical rules.

Despite how painful all this is for me, I was compelled to write to you due to rumors that the next Council of the Church Abroad will be convened in Moscow without you being present and that you will at that time stay in a villa which was presented to you by Archbishop Mark. Everything indicates that your entourage already has prepared the ground for this and perhaps even you yourself.

I write these lines with a sense of profound responsibility and pain. At our age there is simply no point in being cunning (we both are of advanced age). For me it is not indifferent what will remain in the souls of my spiritual children when I am gone. I, the sinful one, want all the much-suffering Russian people to discover genuine Christianity. And looking back over my life, I can testify that my years were

rewarded undeservedly by the Lord's mercy to see the souls being saved within the bosom of the Orthodox Church. I write to you that you might reexamine what you did incorrectly during those years and might correct it. One can justify oneself before mankind, as did Metropolitan Sergius and all the succeeding hierarchs, but not before the Lord's judgement and not before one's own conscience. It would be terrible if your name were to be connected with the end of the Church you head and it would become a laughing stock for those who rejoice in victory over Orthodoxy -- in addition to the church of heretics -- the Moscow Patriarchate. I am not the one to teach you that the Lord is always ready to accept sincere repentance: the Apostle Peter, who out of faint-heartedness denied his divine Teacher, after repentance became a head of the Church, one of whose first hierarchs you also are, Most Reverend Vladyko.

Consider this, holy Vladyko, while the authority is still in your hands, while you are still not deprived of your voice. Do it for the sake of the New Martyrs who were glorified by your predecessors.

I could never have believed that I would be able to write to you all of this.

We always pray for you. Despite your forbidding us to commemorate your name, we do it in our cells and in the church.

Pray for us sinners, too. Bless.

The unworthy and very sinful Abbess Seraphima (Sanin)

Suzdal 10/23 September 1997

Your Reverence, my little sister in Christ
Mother Superior Juliana.

We heard much and read much: we were most distressed and grieved to the point of tears -- so much we did feel sorry for you. We sympathize with you and approve of your great *podvig* [ascetic struggle] in defense of Orthodoxy. You have fulfilled the instructions of your spiritual fathers, now departed to the Lord, who commanded you to strictly preserve the Orthodox faith and under no conditions to allow into your sanctuary any heresy. The sufferings, which you and your sisters and inhabitants of the monastery suffered for Christ's sake, indeed strengthen true Orthodox Christians and, God knows, in the near future, perhaps the martyrs of the last times. You have fulfilled your duty before your spiritual fathers (Patriarch Tikhon, Metr. Anthony, Metr. Anastassy, Metr. Philaret and others, whose name Thou, the Lord, alone knowest) but also before all the Orthodox Christians residing in Russia.

While we admire your *podvig* and do co-suffer with you, we, the genuine Orthodox Christians, are painfully ashamed for the hierarchy of the Church Abroad. All my life, without ceasing, I tirelessly defended the Church Abroad, saying that this is really the Orthodox and true Church, which was preserved by the *Ukaz* of Patriarch Tikhon until it, at an appropriate time, would return to Russia, undamaged, in the very same spirit it had at the time it was forced to leave. But unfortunately, the Moscow Patriarchate has found ways to implant discord in this Church, to demolish the Church to which you, Matushka, do belong. The Moscow Patriarchate found some clergy who hold the same views among those who are near Vladyka Metropolitan Vitaly. It is painful for us to know that those who were sent to your Church to destroy it were accepted and trusted while our Orthodox people, who with pure hearts wanted to unite with you, help you and receive help from you, were rejected as enemies by the hierarchs of your Church. And seeing that you are surrounded by the MP [Moscow Patriarchate] we were forced to leave you and avoid you. We feel very sorry for Metropolitan Vitaly. He is one of those, our metropolitans, holy fathers, who once headed the holy Church. It is a great shame that untrustworthy friends of his, using the simplicity of his soul, turned the wheel guiding the Church Abroad not to the right, but to the left, to Communism.

If only you could know, Matushka Abbess, how our Catacomb [Church] community in Kuban was looking forward to the arrival of our long-awaited Metropolitan Vitaly. Later, when we were in Suzdal, this our secret dream seemed about to be fulfilled: the entrance visas had been obtained and it had been decided even who and with which church banner we would stand to meet the Metropolitan. We thought: Finally we have reached the end. Behold it -- the Orthodox Church -- returned to Russia, shining and confirmed. All hoped that Vladyka Metropolitan would stay in Russia to rule the Church in Russia, would take as assistants our bishops and those who would like to serve in Russia, in our huge country, where there is room for everyone and there is so much to do, that there would be no time for squabbles.

But how sad that none of this happened and everything fell into discord.

Instead of Vladyka Metropolitan his right hand man came, Archbishop Laurus, accompanied by priests from the Moscow Patriarchate. He, although living in their house in the village not more than 2 kilometers away from the church, which at that time already belonged to the Synod Abroad, and although

passing it daily several times, found no time to visit the sheep of his own flock. And only at the last minute, while visiting Suzdal on the day of the commemoration of St. Archdeacon Stephen, did he deliver a sermon to us on how we should make peace with the Moscow Patriarchate. And Archbishop Mark did everything possible to defame the Church Abroad and rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate. He even stated that the Catacomb Church ceased to exist in the 50's.

It seems that in reality it is no longer possible to maintain a relationship with the ROCA. It is quite obvious that in the near future the Church Abroad will be swallowed up by the MP. It is like a rabbit hypnotized by a boa constrictor, which then digs its feet into the ground, squeals, but still goes into the open mouth.

How are we to exist? Again, we will remain alone... There is no hope that we will be united because above all, from our point of view, there is no way we can compromise with the MP.

I believe, Matushka Abbess, that by now you are convinced of what one can expect from the hierarchy of the Church Abroad. You got a knife in the back from them, as did we, too, some time ago.

Be careful also of false brothers and false sisters. I do not know the circumstances under which you have had to live through all of this, but I believe, that if the Abbess of our convent of Gethsemane were on your side and all the sisters of the two convents had united and defended their sacred places, then probably these tragic consequences would not have occurred. Or at least the unjust restrictions would not have been imposed upon you by your own ecclesiastical administration. And now, think how polite it is to meet the Soviet patriarch with flowers and cakes, to humiliate yourself before the heretics, to smile and genuflect. They have thrown pearls before swine -- it cannot be referred to in any other way! You may be sure that she (the Abbess of Gethsemane) will receive from her guest a cake that will stick in her throat. But the main thing is how can she and those with her not fear God, God's judgment which is not hidden behind mountains? Can it not yet be obvious that the Moscow Patriarchate is removing Orthodoxy from Jerusalem in order for antichrist to enter?

Dear little sister in Christ, be bold, stand your ground and do not accept any sort of agreements even under the threat of death, and then you will be a first martyr for the Lord in the persecutions which are probably coming in preparation for antichrist.

Do keep in mind that the sisters of our convent, as well as monastics throughout Russia, spiritual lay people, and they are many hundreds, and probably thousands, are in sympathy with you and your sisters. pray to the Lord Jesus Christ Who strengthens us, in whom we are united and Whose Church will remain undefeated to the end of the ages.

May the Lord grant you faith, patience, and wisdom.

The Mother Superior of the Convent of St. John (Maximovich) Abbess Seraphima (Sanin) with Sisters

10/23 September, 1997 Suzdal

A BUSINESS TRIP OF BISHOP ANTHONY (GRABBE)

On October 3rd Bishop Anthony (Grabbe) President of the Orthodox Palestine Society in the Holy Land left New York for Jerusalem to meet with several officials in view of the expected arrival in the Holy Land of the Minister of the International Affairs of the Russian Federation, Primakov, and the constant efforts to seize property under pretext that they are Russian and should belong to Russia. This property claimed by the Moscow Patriarchate with the assistance now of the government of the Russian Federation, belong to the Orthodox Palestine Society and the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. Both were NEVER controlled by the Russian imperial government and only protected by it from the aggression of Turks. All the documents on the property in the Holy Land verify this, yet in the political "game" there exists the right of the mighty and not the rights of international law, so Mr. Primakov used it in order to seize the Orthodox Palestine Society's property in Jericho (at the fig-tree of Zacharias) and now is coveting some other properties of OPS and REM in Jerusalem.

In order to prevent possible aggression on the part of the Russian Federation against these properties, Bishop Anthony went to Jerusalem. There he met not only with the Patriarch and other bishops, but had meetings with an assistant of Prime Minister Netanyahu, the mayor of Jerusalem and a number of consuls. He managed to restore and strengthen his former connections which he had previously enjoyed as a Chief of the Mission.

Bishop Anthony returned to New York on November 10th and is planning a visit to Washington also with a view to strengthening the legal rights of the Orthodox Palestine Society and also the possible return of the land in Jericho. Unfortunately, his present position as President gives him the opportunity to take measures for defense of the property of the OPS only. The defense of the property of the REM in Jerusalem now solely rests with the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA. Unfortunately, at present we have not heard that the Synod is taking any preventive measures of defense.

VISIT OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW TO THE USA

The whole of the USA media some time ahead responded to the upcoming visit of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the USA and a detailed schedule of his stops was widely announced. Just as much information was given on the Internet. Drawing up his program and the propaganda for his visit was the responsibility of Archbishop Spyridon, who heads the richest and most populated diocese under Bartholomew. He himself has less than four thousand believers in Turkey.

Even before the arrival of the Patriarch it became known that Archbishop Spyridon met with one of the most prominent cardinals in America, O'Connor. As was reported by the official newspaper of the Greek Archdiocese, "The Orthodox Observer" for October, Spyridon and O'Connor "among other issues discussed the depth of cooperation achieved between Roman Catholics and Orthodox at the holy sites in Jerusalem and the status of the current religious situation in Russia".

The same paper, for September, reported that Archbishop Spyridon and Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore made a joint press release that Patriarch Bartholomew will visit Baltimore. In announcing it the cardinal said that "the Archdiocese of Baltimore is honored that the Ecumenical Patriarch has accepted my invitation to visit the Mother Cathedral of the Catholic Church in the United States to **preside at the service and to preach a special message for Roman Catholic Christians in our nation**" (italics by "C. N.").

"The Orthodox Observer" dated November 12th published a number of reports and photographs of Bartholomew's visit to several heretical temples and his "prayers" in them. In a Catholic cathedral, as is stressed by the paper, Patriarch was seated on the very same throne, on which the Roman Pope sat. The Patriarch was vested in *mandia**, but with no omophorion**, probably to prevent reports that he was fully vested. He was vested in the same manner when he participated in some prayer service with the Armenian Monophysites. In one photograph there are depicted standing: Bartholomew, Catholicos Aram I (both in *mandias*) and Archbishop Spyridon. Monophysite Catholicos paid an official visit to Archbishop Spyridon, participated in a service at St. Paul's chapel, then was received privately. Both of them exchanged gifts.

Unfortunately, the contemporary Greeks are not ashamed to exaggerate the importance of the Ecumenical Patriarch among other autocephalous Churches and the Archdiocese's newspaper for October "without batting an eyelid" tells their readers that Bartholomew heads no more and no less than 300 million Orthodox in the world!

Speaking of the importance of Bartholomew at present, the newspaper writes: "Together with His Holiness Pope John Paul II, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has effected unprecedented progress toward the reconciliation of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christian Churches... His role as the primary spiritual leader of the Orthodox Christian world and transitional figure of global significance continues to become more vital with each passing day".

A New Jersey newspaper "The Bergen Record" of October 27th reported that in the gigantic hall of New York (Madison Square Garden) in which circus performances are held, as well as dog and horse shows and other big gatherings, Bartholomew served a Liturgy which was attended by no less than 20 thousand people.

According to the newspaper "The Watertown TAB & Press" of October 23rd, the Armenian Patriarch Aram I came to this little town in New Jersey. There he met with Bartholomew. Both Patriarchs served liturgies in their own churches, but in the evening **Bartholomew went to the Armenian church to concelebrate a vespers with the head of Monophysite heretics!**

A rector of the Armenian church Rev. Antranig Baljian said that "We are not in communion together, but there are overtures to the reunion and understanding each other theologically, and a very close feeling in the line of culture. We come from the same ethnic tradition..."

Bartholomew did not by-pass the question of the "anti-Semitic Holocaust" which is so fashionable for the last few years. The representatives of "Christian" religions vie with one another in hurrying to apologize to Jews for their "insensitivity" during Hitler's regime in different countries. So apologies have already been made by hierarchies of France, Germany, Poland and Hungary. Jews are pressuring the Roman Pope, trying to get from him a similar apology, but the Pope restricts himself only to some hints, which call for "an examination of conscience" in connection with the approaching end of the 2nd millennium. Yet, some ten years ago he established a special Committee which has the task of investigating the role of his Church toward Jews in the recent and distant past. Now, according to "The New York Times" of November 1st, there was a three day symposium in Rome in order to investigate the causes of anti-Semitism. The Pope spoke about it to 60 "theologians" of different faiths. He told them that "in the Christian world -- I do not say on part of the Church as such -- the wrong and unjust interpretations of the New Testament relating to the Jewish people and their presumed guilt circulated for too long, contributing to a feeling of hostility toward these people".

A newspaper "The Jewish Press" from October 31st sadly notes that no Jewish representatives were invited to participate in the work of this Committee. Nevertheless, the Jews are waiting for an official statement by the Vatican.

* The large, outer cloak of a monk, made of colored silk in the case of those with the rank of archimandrite or above

** The minimal vestment indicating the rank of bishop (as the stole does a priest) -- and required during any service

"We hope that such a document will be produced because we have been expecting such an honest reckoning with the past for some 20 years, since Pope John Paul II promised that this would be forthcoming when he met with Jewish leaders in Miami," said Rabbi Rosen.

As per the bulletin "Ecumenical News International", Bartholomew, while in Washington, also visited the American Holocaust Memorial Museum and pointed out "the extraordinary achievement that this monument represents to the spirit of truth and depth of human pain that has plagued this century... The images of this place, the terror which we glimpse but for a moment here, was suffered in the unspeakable depths of living images of God. To even attempt to contemplate this depth of human suffering is almost too much to bear. Yet we must try. We cannot help but see in this place that Jews and Christians bear a special responsibility towards the hope and guarantee that this terrible evil must never again take root within the human psyche... All who died in the Holocaust are martyrs, witnesses who point the way for us to God's love".

The Patriarch also visited St. Vladimir's Seminary and even accepted a honorary doctorate. Metropolitan Theodosius did not conceal his delight. "I was surprised", he said after the visit of more than 500 guests. The host greeted Bartholomew as a creator of the unity of all the Orthodox in America, although nothing indicates that the Ecumenical Patriarch is closer to a favourable decision about the legal status of the OCA's "autocephality".

Bartholomew also visited the National Council of Churches in New York and participated in some sort of "prayer" service. A photograph shows Bartholomew standing in the middle of a group (this time not in *mandia*), next to him stands Archbishop Spyridon and another Greek bishop. On either side of this group stand two women in unusual robes. It seems that in order to separate the Greek bishops from these women, a heretical clergyman was positioned in his vestments, similar to those of the Catholics or Episcopalians.

Our editorial office received several of Bartholomew's speeches delivered in different places in America, but some, the most important ones, are missing, for example, his speech in the Catholic cathedral in Baltimore.

A NEW SCANDAL WITHIN THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

It seems that the Moscow Patriarchate cannot escape the shadow of scandals. Hardly did things quiet down after the documented scandals of illegal and criminal sales of tobacco, alcohol, oil, diamonds and even chicken legs, when another has occurred -- this time with the "Christian Bank" of which one of the primary depositors (1/5th of 6 million rubles in 1992) is the Moscow Patriarchate. The name of Archbishop Sergius of Solnechnogradsk was constantly advertised on TV as a President of the Board of Trustees of this bank. Russians, who have learned to be distrustful, nevertheless started to make deposits in this "Christian Bank", trusting the Church more than crooked business people. Yet, it soon became known that the Moscow Patriarchate simply cheated her depositors. The bank went bankrupt within a period of slightly more than 2 years. As reported by the newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of October 16th, in February the depositors petitioned Patriarch Alexis for help. After a month passed, the depositors received a letter signed by Archbishop Sergius, in another words, president of the Board of Trustees, in which he explained to those who suffered losses that this bank is a commercial institution and not a Church-owned one and, therefore, the Church bears no responsibility for the financial manipulations of the bank. This despite the fact that an official participant in the bank is the charitable Department of Foreign Relations of the MP and the President of its Board of Trustees is Archbishop Sergius!

The unfortunate depositors who were robbed by the Patriarchal bank wrote another letter to the Patriarch in which they referred to the answer that they had received from Archbishop Sergius and posed the question: "Does this mean that every department of the Moscow Patriarchate does whatever it wants, without the knowledge of the Head of Church?" Then the depositors wrote: "Through your action of withdrawing ["removing"] the last savings of seniors, pensioners, military and veterans, the clergy of the Patriarchate has lost the right to be instructors of the population, to be its conscience. How can people imitate such pastors? Is not the Patriarchate deliberately digging up the soil to plant the seeds of extortion, greed and loss of faith, compromising by her actions **the Holy Orthodox Church?** We are some 3,400 depositors, together with their families and close relatives -- no less than 20,000 people. You are trying to push all these people away from the faith of their fathers and grandfathers."

Can one be surprised after these widely known and endless dirty scandals within the Moscow Patriarchate that those who deal with statistics have noticed a sharp decline of attendance at church services in Russia? Certainly, the KGB agents in cassocks are not concerned with preaching the Gospel and are in no way worried about the millstone hanging around their necks for scandalizing these "little ones."

It is appropriate that the victimized depositors used the term "removing" in their letter to Ridiger-"Drozdov", because this makes one think of the methods for "removing" Church treasures by the former Communist persecutors of the Church.

A PARISH OR A "FACTIONAL CONSPIRACY"?

A newspaper "Russkaya Mysl" of October 16th published an *ukaz* of the Moscow Patriarch regarding affairs of the parish of Priest Kochetkov and beating up of Priest Dubovitsky, entitling it "Without Comment". When trying to grasp the meaning of this *ukaz* and after checking upon the cited canons, we found it desirable, however, to make some comments.

The 9th canon of the Second Council in Constantinople can be indeed applied in the case of a scandalous fight especially in the altar area. It speaks of the defrocking of those priests "who dare to beat up the faithful who sinned or unbelievers who have offended someone." Yet the 18th canon of Fourth (Chalcedonian) Ecumenical Council starts with the words: "The crime of conspiracy, or of factionalism (i.e. of factious partisanship) already prohibited by secular laws, ought still more to be forbidden to obtain in the Church of God that it may not occur." Then further on it explains that it has in mind persons who are "conspiring or (are) engaged in fractiousness of any kind" or even "those hatching plots against bishops." The 34th canon of the Council in Trullo expresses the same idea and in almost the same words as the 18th Chalcedonian canon.

Involuntarily the question arises: how does the Patriarch define scandal in a parish of his diocese, which for more than a decade has preached all sorts of Renovatist heresies? If he considers it to be a regular parish, then according to the literal sense of the canons, Kochetkov has to be defrocked and with that the incident would be closed, but if Alexis sees in this parish a cause of "conspiring factions" and with this a goal of laying a "trap" for a bishop, then why did not the Patriarchate take any measures to stop those traps?

There is no doubt that Kochetkov is in spirit close to the Patriarchate and it therefore is guided by the "principle of *oekonomia* [accommodation] and not that of *akrivia* [strictness]" as is stated in the *ukaz*. At the same time, the Patriarchate does not want to look too bad to outsiders and therefore she appoints as a rector the rather conservative Archpriest O. Klemyshev. Priest Doukhovitsky, who suffered battery, was appointed as a second priest "under the supervision of an experienced spiritual father-rector".

In this manner, "both the wolves are sated and the sheep are kept whole"!

A MASS CONVENTION OF TALMUDISTS

"The New York Times" of September 29th reported that in Madison Square Garden in New York, 20 thousand Orthodox Jews assembled who for seven and a half years to study daily two pages of Talmud (Jewish religious law). Since the hall can accommodate only 20 thousand, six more thousand had to gather in a nearby hall and 18 more thousand found halls on Long Island and other smaller halls in nearby cities. The total participation was of some 70 thousand persons. Beside this, on the same day, some 30 thousand more believers gathered in other countries. The majority of the participants belonged to the Hasidic sect of Judaism, but among the attendees there were also some Jews belonging to the Conservative movement in Judaism. As Rabbi Sherer said: "The Talmud is going out to the masses in a way that was unthinkable 30 years ago".

This program of Talmudic studies was started in 1923, but this is the first time that the graduation ceremony was held simultaneously for more than 100 thousand people around the world. Usually, the studies are held at nearby synagogues and the participants spend no less than an hour per day on them.

The previous cycle of seven year courses closed in New York in the same hall with 20 thousand participants.

When this Talmudic course was initially announced there were very few registrants, but with each year the number of them steadily increased. This last gathering was the 10th.

This is an opportunity for us Christians to take an example from the Talmudists, who so vigilantly prepare for coming of their "Messiah", i.e. antichrist. It would be interesting to find out how many contemporary Christians even read (not to mention study) daily at least 15-20 verses of the New Testament?

Just recently, two newspapers: "The New York Times" and "The Jewish Press" published a full page ad entitled: "Are you a Kohen or Levi? Become Part of Royal History. Discover the Power of Your Genes. Be Counted in the House of Levi."

The aim of those ads is to call upon descendants of the priestly and Levitic tribes to recall their "current obligations and duties to their people. Many are assimilating and distracting themselves from their heritage. It is our mission to stem this hemorrhaging of Jewish souls particularly from these descendants of Levi."

Then the ad states that special seminars are opening for the descendants of servants to Jewish religion, this including the studies of practical traditions from the period of the Second Temple.

The Jews have some difficulties with the Kohens. To begin with, not all are able by now to certify their descent from the house of Aaron. Besides, Kohens, as with Orthodox priests, are restricted by the rules, which are listed in the book of Leviticus (21: 7), that is the chastity of their wives. As is explained in "The Jewish Press" of Nov. 21, the priests of the ancient Temple were not allowed to drink wine, in order to be ever ready to serve at the altar.

Rabbi Judas Prince adds, that if today's Kohens were to be forbidden to drink wine after millenniums of nonexistence of the Temple, there would be very few who would be willing to admit that they are irreproachable descendants of the ancient priests.

A REVIEW OF THE JOURNAL "VOZVRASHCHENIYE"

The editors of the ecclesiastical magazine "Russian Orthodoxy" (published in St. Petersburg) have sent to "Church News" a review of the magazine "Vozvrashcheniye" ("Return"), a publication of the ROCA with permission to reprint it. The authors entitled this article "Bibliography" and therefore was in no need of a signatory. Here, we reprint it without any changes.

The current issue, #2 (10), has appeared of the magazine "Vozvrashcheniye" for 1997, published in St. Petersburg by A. L. and O. I. Nikitins. As is known, this publication was established in 1993 at the initiative of a number of clergy of the ROCA jurisdiction in St. Petersburg and its main purpose is to highlight, in a contemporary and objective manner, the life of free parishes in Russia. In all fairness we have to state that at present this is done much more effectively by such publications as "Vertograd-Info" in Moscow or "Vestnik Istinnoi Pravoslavnyaya Tserkvi" ("Herald of the True Orthodox Church") in Ukraine. The magazine starts with an official section: the Paschal Epistle by Metropolitan Vitaly, information on the Council of Russian Bishops (according to materials from "Vestnik IPT") and the glorification of new saints. Then there follows a reprint of some chapters from the book of Archpriest S. Petrovsky, "The Human Heart", published in Odessa in 1913 and reprinted in Montreal in 1992. The article of Archpriest Lev Lebedev "Hold to Whatever You Have So No One Can Steal Your Crown"... is interesting. Touching on the problems of the contemporary spiritual state of the Russian people and the situation of the Free parishes, the author however "forgets" to point out one that of the most important problems with which the clergy and laity of the ROCA were confronted in the Homeland during this entire 7 year period is the almost total misunderstanding and indifference by a majority of the ROCA bishops for our ecclesiastical problems.

And yet, precisely this basic factor was pointed out in the reports to the second session of the Council of Bishops in 1994 by Archpriest Konstantin Fedorov and A. L. Nikitin, and just recently in the pages of "Pravoslavnyaya Rus" #6 (1579) by M. Nazarov. It is hard to believe that Fr. Lev did not notice this most important circumstance. Rather, the recent ordination of his son to the priesthood performed by Bishop Eutikhy (Kourochkin) results in more "corrections" to the so-far uncompromising, although pessimistic enough, position of the venerable Archpriest.

The article by Priest Timothy Alferov "Inoculation... against Grace" makes one wonder not only about the church orientation of the author himself, but also about the position of the magazine which published this material. The article is written in a form of an open letter to Archbishop Mark in reference to his second meeting with the false-Patriarch Alexis II. Yet, instead of a healthy critique of those sad events, Fr. Timothy... continues to prove that grace exists in the Moscow Patriarchate and in this way willingly or unwillingly justifies the actions of Vladyka Mark from the theological point of view. Indeed, if the MP and similar heretical gatherings have grace, then why not to unite with them? This is exactly what Archbishop Mark and those of his opinions in Russia and abroad are striving for. It is hardly necessary to say that such false teaching benefits those who are open or secret adherents of the MP. Truly, the author takes into consideration the First Hierarch's position regarding this question as written in a letter on Nov. 29th/Dec. 12th, 1996 (See Vestnik "RP" #2 (6)). Therefore, Fr. Timothy introduces a quite ridiculous term of "weakened" or "defective" grace in the MP. And that is not all. The author states that "such a grace-filled experience is quite familiar to the children of the MP. They feel it and know it..." But, such a subjective mental 'method' of determining the existence or non-existence of grace would be gladly agreed to by any Pentecostal, Krishnaite or Catholic (the stigmata phenomenon alone need be mentioned!) and in general any kind of heretic, who is experiencing even deeper feelings during their "services". Fr. Timothy, as if consciously, ignores not only the position of the holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia regarding this question, but also the position of all former First Hierarchs of the ROCA. If one recalls how, just recently, the author enthusiastically defended the unorthodox ecclesiology of Greek Metropolitan Cyprian [of Fili], then every Orthodox reader indeed has something to think about.

The work of Monk Boris (Efremov) from Jordanville "Union with a Whore" -- one can only salute. But the publication following it, by V. V. Antonov from St. Petersburg, of "A Secret Church in Kolomiagi" provokes skepticism. The author is not merely a regular member of the MP, but for a number of years has been a deputy chief editor of the Patriarchal magazine "St. Petersburg Diocesan Register". In

Moscow as well as in St. Petersburg he is known as a church provocateur (one needs just to mention the scandal involving his name in connection with the Fund for the restoration of Spas na Vodakh (Saviour on the Water) in the summer of 1996!). And how one is to interpret panegyrics of V. V. Antonov, addressed to the Catacomb Church on the pages of "Vozvrashcheniye" when his personal position is diametrically opposed to his words? As is known, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand" (Mt. 12: 25). And through the pages of "Vozvrashcheniye" from one issue to the next there wander about not only such authors like Antonov, but also such devoted adherents of the MP as A. Chernoglazov and others.

Why the editors of "Vozvrashcheniye" open her pages to these two-faced pro-patriarchal authors we can only wonder.

The recollections of Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky at first glance seem to be quite reliable. Yet, in the editors' preface (p. 38) something unbelievable is published: "Fr. Michael... one of the first to join the secretly ordained Bishop Lazarus (Zhurbenko), now Archbishop of Odessa and Tambov". It is common knowledge that precisely Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky was the initiator of the total non-acceptance of the then Priest Lazarus Zhurbenko because he turned to the Patriarchate for ordination. At the meeting of the Catacomb clergy in Tambov in 1978 in presence of Abbot P., who is in good health, Fr. Vissarion and others, Fr. Michael verified this position. This decision in those years was supported by all the Catacomb clergy, without exception. When Bishop Barnabas was looking for a worthy candidate for ordination to the Catacomb Church, Fr. Lazarus (then a priest monk) cunningly offered the name of the widowed Fr. Michael and he himself offered to personally invite him to episcopal consecration. After receiving the invitation, signed by Priest Monk Lazarus (Zhurbenko), quite naturally Fr. Michael Rozhdestvensky did not go. Vladyka Barnabas was left with neither a choice, nor the time and he was forced to consecrate Priest Monk Lazarus bishop. This position of Fr. Michael regarding Bishop Lazarus remained unchanged to the day of his repose. Such is the story, known to practically all Catacomb believers in Russia. The editorial office of "Russian Orthodoxy" has many addresses and telephones of Catacomb Christians, who personally knew Fr. Michael and who could verify the above mentioned facts. It is even more sad to see such historical falsification on the pages of a magazine which pretends to be objective.

The material published with signature of "the very sinful and unworthy layman Igor Svidnitzky" from St. Petersburg (p. 46-47) looks no less strange. The author, who was baptized a bit more than one and a half year ago by the Catacomb Priest V. in Moscow, tries to discuss matters of canonical law and doubts the critique of the false-teaching of the presence of grace in the MP. In so doing, he does not trouble himself to examine the question in its essence, but with aplomb manipulates holy canons and subjective logical premises. As a layman, I. Svidnitzky himself, and even more the editors of the magazine should remember that canon law is one of the most difficult [serious] subjects and is studied in the highest ecclesiastical institutions. Therefore, the reasoning about it by a neophyte (who, according to church regulations were not allowed to teach in the church for 5 years and, still less, write in ecclesiastical publications) should not be taken seriously.

As regarding some Catacomb clergy who authored the petitions to the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA, His Eminence Vladyka Vitaly knows them personally and he himself fully shares their church views. This is verified also by the cancellation of liturgical and prayerful communion with the Greek Metr. Cyprian and his Synod as well as the position of Metr. Vitaly regarding the "grace" of the mysteries of the MP, as declared in his letter to Archbishop Mark on Nov. 29/Dec. 12, 1996, in addition to being previously verified in personal conversations.

Well, the editors conclude this issue of the magazine "Vozvrashcheniye" with an offer to receive church literature from Fr. Timothy Alferov, whose books "help people to find a way to the church" (p. 51). Knowing the views of the author, it is right to ask: but to which Church and by which path?

It is quite beyond comprehension what makes the editors of "Vozvrashcheniye" publish what is in every respect questionable material, which -- on the one hand -- directly or indirectly leads to rapprochement with the MP and -- on the other -- in no way corresponds to the present position of the ROCA? Maybe the reason is a fear of losing some of the liberally minded subscribers from abroad? In any case, it is very sad that this enterprise, which started so auspiciously, descended to such a level.

REMARKS: While the "Church News" editors fully agree with the critique presented by "Russian Orthodoxy" of "Vozvrashcheniye", it has to be noted that its editors are not fully informed regarding the relationship of the Synod of Bishops of ROCA with the heretical hierarchy of Greek Metropolitan Cyprian. The Synod of Bishops as well as the Council of Bishops, when entering into communion with this group, did not trouble to examine its ecclesiology and realized too late that they had put themselves in a difficult position. The Synod indeed no longer concelebrates with this

hierarchy, yet, to officially break relations with this group is not so simple, in spite of the present desire to do so. One could think of possible obstacles to such a decision that lie in the "award of the Florovsky Foundation" to Metropolitan Vitaly for his bold defense of the truth and also in the expensive gifts, in the form of a panagia to the Metropolitan himself -- as well as panagias to all the bishops who participated at the glorification of St. John of Shanghai.

All this opens the way to possible blackmail on the part of Cyprian. For its scandalous prayerful communion with this group, the Church Abroad has again "to thank" the very same Archbishop Mark of Berlin, who for a long time prior to the Synod's and Council of Bishops' decision in this case, illegally concelebrated with representatives of the Cyprian hierarchy.

The late Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) shortly before the session of the Council in 1994 wrote a critique of the ecclesiology of Cyprian's group and it was not only duly mailed to all members of the Council of Bishops, but also published in "Church News" of Sept./Oct. 1994 # 5 (40). In concluding his article, he wrote: "Indeed, by not carefully investigating the case and by forgetting the earlier anathematization of New Calendarist-Ecumenists (and maybe even without wishing to revoke this decision) our Council, no matter how hard it is to acknowledge, put itself under its own anathema. If it had attentively examined the nets spread before it, it would never have made such a self-contradictory decision".

A DECLARATION OF THE ROMAN POPE

Due to the fact that the Jews for some time have been very strongly pressuring the Roman Pope with demands to firmly (and not indirectly) condemn so-called "anti-Semitism," he had to make a more explicit declaration on this subject. According to the newspaper "The Christian News" of Nov. 10. on Friday October 31, the Pope for the first time hinted that Roman Catholicism did little to defend Jews from persecutions of the 40's. The Pope not only told 60 scientists, who were occupied with this question in Rome, that "anti-Semitism is totally unjustified and absolutely condemnable," but also added that "These sentiments contributed to a softening of many consciences, so that when Europe was swept by the wave of persecutions inspired by pagan anti-Semitism... the spiritual resistance of many was not what humanity was expecting on the part of the disciples of Christ." This declaration was immediately widely announced in the press and on TV.

The Jews, to a certain degree were satisfied with this declaration and agreed that this is a big step forward after the one made by the Vatican in 1965, when Catholics declared at their Council that Jews had nothing to do with the Saviour's crucifixion and only the Romans were to blame. Rabbi Leon Klenicki made the remark that "what the Pope said today would not have been said in 1965." Another Rabbi, David Blumenthal, added that "this is a continuation of a line and an attitude toward Jews and Judaism which really began with Nostra Aetate [an encyclical] and has come a long way. These are steps in the right direction. The question now is how is that going to be implemented... Forgiveness is a Christian concept. They must take concrete steps."

It is obvious that the Jews are happy with the Pope's declaration, but there can be no doubt that they are going to pressure him even more, until he makes a more formal statement of repentance.

FEWER AND FEWER CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of October 1st noticed with alarm that in a few years there will be no Christians left, who are leaving now in en masse. Afif Safieh, the Palestinian ambassador to the Vatican said that "Today you have many more Christian Palestinians in Chile than you have Christian Palestinians in Palestine. In Sydney, Australia, you have many more Christians from Jerusalem than you have Christians in Jerusalem. That is a very tragic situation for the Christian community". He foresees that by the end of 2000, there might be no Christians left "in the land of its birth".

Israeli government is doing everything possible, without provoking an international scandal, to get rid of Palestinian inhabitants who have the same rights to live there as the Jews. It is very hard for Palestinians to get even menial work; their houses are systematically expropriated or razed by bulldozers.

Very few know that the license plates for Jews and Arabs are different in color and Arab cars are rudely stopped at the slightest provocation.