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## PASCHAL EPISTLE OF THE FIRST HIERARCH OF THE ROCOR METROPOLITAN VITALY

### CHRIST IS RISEN !

My greetings to all of you, our flock scattered like wheat through the whole world!

Pascha, the feast of feasts, is when heaven bows down to our poor earth and transfigures everyone with its unwaning light. This is why Pascha was, is and will be for every Orthodox soul the real, spiritual, ultimate and only goal of its whole life. It is the longed for goal of being eternally with the Risen Saviour after the general resurrection of the whole human race.

However we often forget that the way to the eternally blessed Pascha passes inevitably through the Holy Week of the Passion. The dismissals of the church services on Holy Thursday and on the Great Friday of the Holy and saving Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ proclaims with force and brevity what our Saviour endured: "He who in His surpassing low showed us the most excellent way of humility ..." and "He who endured spitting and scourging and blows, the Cross and death, for the salvation of the world..." This path towards Pascha can be expressed through the two supreme Christians virtues -- humility and endurance of sufferings.

If we are not capable of even approaching such an exalted form of humility and endurance as that of Our Lord, then at least we should fulfill what the Church prescribes for us in these holy days of the Great Fast. We must fast seriously, following the rules of the Church exactly: we must not spare ourselves in the number of our bows to the waist and prostrations to the ground. As soon as our flesh, our body, begins to groan and cry out from these spiritual efforts, and dishonestly starts making worldly polite bow, bowing the head only, then remind it what that great ascetic of the Universal Church of Christ, St. John of the Ladder, says: "My flesh, my body, you are my friend and you are my enemy" (Homily 15, # 86) I am eternally bound to you, for you will be resurrected and we will be together eternally. Be my friend in this short earthly life of ours and then we will worthily greet Pascha and we will never forget it, even while still here in this vale of tears. So let us labour without sparing ourselves, and we will attain the eternal blessedness.

I, Vitaly, your lowly Archpastor, wish you this radiant Pascha. Amen.

Metropolitan Vitaly, Pascha 1998

### PASCHAL EPISTLE

of His Eminence VALENTIN, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir to the faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church

### CHRIST IS RISEN!

"Today all creation is cheerful and joyful because  
Christ is Risen and hell is captured"

Heaven and earth are cheerful and joyful today because Christ is Risen! Life has shone from the grave and today we sing in spiritual joy to our Saviour the victorious hymn: CHRIST IS RISEN!

In this great and bright feast of holy Pascha we see the Victor over death coming out of the grave and granting eternal life to all those who call upon His Name.

The Resurrection of Christ inspires within us joyful gratitude and deepest love toward Him Who wished to make us heirs and participants in life and urges us to imitate Him in all the deeds of our life. The risen Christ is the source of light, constantly illuminating our life. The risen Christ with the flame of His Divine love warms up our soul, a place of Orthodox faith, unspeakable love and spiritual joy about Him! The risen Christ today draws near to us with His Grace!

We sincerely believe that only the risen Christ can transform people into chaste children of God and only He, in combination of our own will, can up lift Russia, enlighten her and give her eternal life because He is Light, Life and Way and Truth! The joy about Risen Christ is inseparable from a hidden hope for resurrection of Russia after her Golgothic sufferings. And if this hope does not materialize, it means our people didn't do something most important, without which a past sin cannot be redeemed before God Omnipotent.

While rejoicing in Christ the Life-giver we, the Orthodox Christians, should not forget that the current year is a special one for the Russian Orthodox Church. This is the year which is 80 years from the day of the terrible crime which the theomachistic and misanthropic powers committed the bestial murder of God's Anointed Holy Passion Bearer Tsar Martyr Nicholas II and His August Family. The forced abdication of the Tsar from the throne happened during Great Lent, which was a symbol of the beginning of an era of unprecedented disasters for our people, the inevitability of punishment and the necessity of repentance.

In spite of so many years that have passed, the wounds from those inhuman traumas still bleed. One would think that the Passion Week of evil years, bloody wars, destruction, violence, mockery of sacred things in Russia had passed, but still today the much-suffering great Russian nation does not see a ray of hope in its earthly life and is dragging a pitiful existence and with every year, with every day that passes is more and more convinced of the truthfulness of Holy Scripture's words: "Put your trust not in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no salvation" (Ps. 146:3), because "All men are liars" (Ps. 116:11). Unfortunately, the Moscow Patriarchate, which does not recognize the sainthood of the Holy Imperial Martyrs, continues to feed lies to the Russian People.

Let us not forget: 80 years ago this Pascha the Royal Sufferers in the Ipatiev House encountered the Golgotha which they ascended for the sake of their people, which means -- for us.

Following their holy example, let us not grumble about "bad luck," but let us turn to the risen Christ, the Giver of worldly and heavenly good things with a prayerful voice: "Risen Jesus, let us not perish in a crowd of false courtiers, but have mercy, save and resurrect our souls, as Thou art good and Lovest mankind!"

With these all-joyful days of Christ's Resurrection I cordially greet you, beloved in the Lord, fathers, brothers and sisters with the Feast of Feasts: Holy Pascha! I wish you to receive peace, paschal joy from the risen Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the World, because there is no greater joy, but the news of the risen Christ!

May the risen Christ grant all of us resurrection of soul in order to live eternally with Jesus, the Son of Man. Amen.

VERILY CHRIST IS RISEN!

With much love in Risen Christ,

Humble Valentin, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir.

Christ's Pascha 1998

## THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

(Her contemporary significance)

As archpastor of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, I consider it my sacred duty to address this letter to all the children of our Church. I find myself compelled to do this by a certain spiritual indifference to the truth which has arisen, and by what has become a profound lack of understanding of the exceptional, unique significance of our Church for the whole Orthodox world and for the world of heterodox western Christianity.

So let it be said that, for however many years the Lord wills it to exist outside the borders of Russia, our Church never was, is not, and never will be a "jurisdiction," but Christ's true Church of Russia, with all that this great name implies. It has its canonical episcopate with the fullness of Apostolic succession. It is now led by its fourth Metropolitan in accordance with the blessing and intentional decree of the last lawful Patriarch, Tikhon, who was freely elected by the free episcopate of the whole of Russia at its last Council in Moscow in 1918.

Our Church has already been adorned by the holiness of its own saints, which it has glorified here, outside Russia, and by the whole choir of martyrs, both those known to us and those unknown. Our Church, which is found in all countries of the world, carries out missionary work in each of its parishes bringing people of other nationalities into communion with our Holy Orthodox Faith. It holds regular meetings of its full Council of Bishops, as well as meetings of its Synod of Bishops, which direct the affairs of the Church in the periods between Councils. It also has its monasteries and convents where monks and nuns lead the monastic life which is one of the most important facets of the nature of every true Church. Finally we have our own press, regularly printing publications and newsletters containing spiritually edifying material.

Now let us look at its spiritual essence. Our Church is the Virgin fleeing across the wilderness from the red dragon (Rev. 12: 3-6). The desert is the de-christianized west, in which freedom can still be found - freedom which our Church seeks, because in reality this is all that it needs. Through our Holy Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia sounds the voice of Holy Russia, the very essence and nature of which is the inner, secret, spiritual, ever-insatiable thirst of the Russian soul to live the life of the saints, to live according to the Holy Gospel, as far as strength permits, and always only with the help of God. Her voice has always sounded through all the thousands of years of the historical existence of the Russian Church. It has never been afraid of anybody, and never kept silent. Through the mouth of Basil the Blessed it reproached Ivan the Terrible, and it was not afraid of Peter I. If this voice is silenced, there will no longer be a Holy Russia, nor any Russia at all. When the Bolsheviks led by Lenin had come to dominate almost all of Russian soil, in the south, in the Crimea, General Wrangel's White Army became the nucleus of armed resistance. From all over Russia all those who wanted to join its ranks made their way to the Crimea, all the faithful sons of Holy Russia. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were leaving their homeland across Russia's immeasurably long frontiers. Those who joined the Crimean exodus were distinguished by their uncompromising stand, their unity and their idealism. Our Odigitria, the Mother of God Herself, in her Icon, the Kursk Root Icon, that most ancient of Russian holy objects, left together with this Crimean exodus, and it was accompanied by a vast assembly of hierarchs, led by the most senior of them, Metropolitan Anthony, together with hundreds of priests and clergymen, with the flower of the Russian people, right thinking Russian intellectuals and world-renowned scholars. Together with this great exodus the voice of Holy Russia left the Russian land. This voice was taken up by the Holy Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. And now, when we hear reports on the world wide web, or the Internet, to the effect that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate are two parts of one Church, and that it is none other than the Moscow Patriarchate that is the "Mother Church" of all Orthodox Russia -- I consider it my duty to make a reply to this crude error, bordering on heresy.

If the Church is Christ Himself, then how is it possible to imagine Christ Our Lord with the traitor Metropolitan Sergius next to Him, or Christ next to Drozdov\* (Alexis II)? If the Serbian holy man, Justin Popovitch, could say and write that the last two Serbian patriarchs were unlawfully elected to this highest level of the hierarchy by the communist party, then we can have no hesitation in saying that the last four patriarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate have been chosen by

the communist state,\*\* which has suddenly declared itself to be a democracy. This senior administration of the Moscow Patriarchate is simply a government institution, devoid of Divine grace, and those who comprise it are no more than government officials in cassocks. There are "clever" people who will tell you that this entire letter is just the Metropolitan's own personal opinion. But here I will reply that I have been compelled to write this letter by endless protests from throughout our great Russian diaspora. So this letter of mine is the voice of our Holy Russia outside the borders of Russia, and I have simply expressed it for all to hear. God grant that those who do not agree with this letter will not let their differences of opinion become transformed into a more profound disunity of soul; this would be the real tragedy.

Let us always thank the Lord that we are in the Holy Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, which throughout the 80 years of its existence has trodden the straight, royal path of God, without ever turning aside and losing its way.

+ Metropolitan Vitaly

\* Drozdov -- the KGB code name for Alexis Ridiger, formerly Metropolitan of Leningrad, who subsequently became the present patriarch.

\*\* Canon 3 of the 7th Ecumenical Council at Nicaea

Every appointment of a bishop, or of a presbyter, or of a deacon made by civil rulers shall remain void in accordance with the Canon (Apostolic Canon 30) which says "If any bishop comes into possession of a church by employing secular rulers, let him be deposed from office, and let him be excommunicated, together with all those who communicate with him."

#### LETTER OF ARCHBISHOP MARK TO THE MEMBERS OF ROCOR SYNOD

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

Munich, 30 January/12 February, 1998

Members of the Hierarchical Synod

On the afternoon of Thursday, February 5, VI. Metr. telephoned me informing me that he had received a Declaration signed by me together with Archb. Theophan of the MP and he said that he had known nothing about these dialogues, that I had no right to meet in such dialogues. I replied to him that I had reported on this at the Sobor. Vladyka repeated that he knew nothing and hung up the phone. On Sunday, February 8, -- our altar feast of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia -- in the morning before Liturgy I received from VI. Metr. a fax in which it was again confirmed that I had no right to conduct these dialogues and that he imposed upon me a punishment: from that time I was no longer a member of the Synod and "had the right to be present" only at those sessions at which my personal affair would be discussed.

This "right" I have no intention of using, and do not intend "to justify myself". However, in the following I openly set forth my point of view.

VI. Metr. writes to me concerning the dialogues conducted by us within German borders: "The clergy were for some reason silent, saying nothing to me and you also did not make this known to me."

The clergy of the German Diocese were not silent. At the Diocesan Convention the clergy composed an appeal to the Hierarchical Sobor held in the Lesna Convent with the request that they bless the dialogues whose goal was the elucidation of the positions involved with a view to the possibility of a future All-Russian Local Council.

After an exhaustive discussion of this question, the necessity to clarify our relationship with the other parts of the Russian Orthodox Church was adopted in the Epistle of the Hierarchical Sobor held in Lesna Convent in 1993:

"With open discussions we must prepare the ground for the free, genuine and fruitful All-Russian Sobor."

On this basis we entered into dialogues with the local bishops and certain of the clergy of the MP in Germany.

Subsequently I reported to the Hierarchical Sobor about the dialogues with the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in Germany. In Minute No. 1 of the Hierarchical Sobor of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia of 21 August/3 September, 1996, in Part 8, it states: "Archb. Mark recounted to us the discussions which were conducted with the representatives of the MP on our territory."

This clearly refers to "discussions" in the plural. VI. Metr. at that time verbally expressed a positive evaluation of the results of the discussions: the dispelling of the illusions of certain of the clergy of the MP. Now, however, he denies the very fact of my reports about the discussions as well as his knowledge of them.

I bow profoundly before the personal podvigs of prayer of our First Hierarch, who rises early in the morning daily to serve the Midnight Service. This exceptional and extremely trying practice at times demands too much from a person, all the more from one of such venerable age. And we all can be so immersed that we can forget things, and can affirm that sleep sometimes overcomes us during sessions. But just because of this, I feel that for the correct direction of our Church needs, the First Hierarch needs an office in which his letters (all the more with those as harsh as this new missive to me) would be reviewed if only as to the reliability of their contents. This purely practical requirement of mine should not trouble anyone; it should not [illegible] about these inadequacies of the Synod's office which I mentioned at the Hierarchical Sobor of 1996 which received my proposal very sympathetically. (cf. Minutes p. 15)

The development of these discussions were mentioned twice at this same Sobor of 1996. In the document approved by the Sobor, "Opinion of the Committee on the Question of the Review of 'The Position of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia' ", it states: "We recommend the desirability of continuing and increasing the initial efforts in the Diocese of Germany of conversations with the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate as well as the possibility of expanding the scope of the participants beyond one diocese. It is desirable to elevate the level of the discussions and attract to them our best theological forces." (Part 9 [?])

It also states: "In anticipation of the summoning of such a Council, it behooves us to strive set up contacts with the other parts of the Local Russian Church, first of all with the Moscow Patriarchate, as heading up the de facto largest part of the Orthodox faithful in Russia." (Part 6)

The Metropolitan writes: "Outside your diocese you have no right to any sort of discussions."

Independently of the above citations, the Metropolitan himself cites the literal heading of the Declaration of 3/16-12, 1997, where it says: "within the German borders." How can I have been discussing "outside my diocese", since I do not attribute any special significance beyond the borders of our diocese to this document?

Repeatedly in recent years the Sobor's measures expressed the need to clarify the relationship with the MP and other parts of the Russian Church. Even at the Sobor of 1994 in San Francisco, Bishop Daniel asked: "Why are we met in Sobor? If the majority of the hierarchs are agreed, and one of the bishops, even the Presiding Bishop, individually abrogates decisions, then there is no use to call a Sobor..." (Minutes No. 9, 30 June/13 July, 1994, p. 3)

VI. Metr. writes about some sort temptation which my actions have in some way caused "amongst the clergy, both in Germany, and throughout Europe." I can with complete confidence say that in the German Diocese there is no temptation.

On the contrary, the above overtures which I have entered into are met with complete approval by my clergy and my flock. I can state this with such assurance because at our Diocesan conventions all the developments of the present situation in the Russian Church were thoroughly analyzed and discussed. If some temptation has arisen, it is not in the German Diocese, but perhaps there where they have not penetrated to the essence of the words and deeds involved as should be, there where public discussions are evoked by "open letters." A collection of signatures was attempted (of course, behind my back) even in my diocese. A signature on such an "open letter" was given (and that by misunderstanding) only by one priest of my diocese, not a Russian, who did not notice, and as a doubly honorable pastor could not suspect, that the first lines included slanders against our nuns in the Holy Land.

But with the honest and open discussion and with attentive reading of, for example, the Declaration of 3/16-12-1997, no temptation should arise. Rather in it is stated only the position which was adhered to by St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco and VI. Anthony of Geneva and Western Europe, as well as by many other hierarchs and clergy of the Russian Church Outside Russia. Reservations and one-sided interpretations are always possible where there is an absence of calm and open discussion. This we need above all.

The words of VI. Metr. that I, as it were, *said* nothing to him, are without foundation, as has already been shown. But apart from this, what was the prior experience, in regard to my *written* statements, in the name of our First Hierarch?

At times he paid them no attention, not even taking them into consideration. A more tragic case of such an procedure occurred for me in connection with the consecration of Valentin (Rusantsov). Following my visit to Suzdal -- my first visit to Russia, done with the blessing of the Hierarchical Sobor -- I reported that the ordination of the then Archm. Valentin was a glaring mistake. This letter resulted in no reaction whatsoever from the First Hierarch. When I later asked him several times by telephone how VI. Metr. regarded the thoughts contained in my letter, he replied that he had not received it. As a result I sent this letter altogether six times. It may be that even so this letter did not reach Vladyka, or it may be that it was difficult for him to read it because it was long and was printed in relatively small type.

As regards further developments: at the Sobor a decision was taken as to how to regard the possible consecration of Archm. Valentin. Conditions were laid down, that is, the participation of VI. Lazar was required, the place of consecration, Suzdal, and so on. All this oriented towards the fulfillment of fundamental ecclesiastical rules, but in fact these were not observed. When the consecration was designated for Brussels, I had no desire to participate. In this regard I held discussions more than once with VI. Metr. and the late VI. Antony. Only because the danger that my non-participation would be seen as a revolt against the elder hierarchs and my opposition might turn into a schism in our Church did I all the same participate. The consequences of this illegal action resulted in irreparable harm to our Church, effectively sowing temptation in the Russian Church as a whole. And such time and effort was lost, and is being lost now, to in some way correct these bitter consequences.

The point is not only with regard to Archm. Valentin, but in those confusions which resulted between the newly consecrated Bishop Valentin and Archb. Lazar from 1991 to 1993. Later they were reconciled (for the moment), only to still further aggravate the problems facing us, and then to diverge even further, leaving us with what?

In sum, my attempts to be obedient for the sake of my elders, contrary to the witness of my ecclesiastical conscience, in part deprived me of audacity. But in regard to my own diocese I acted in this according to my arch-pastoral conscience and in no way supported attempts by some to build the relationship to the MP on falsehood and hypocrisy. I adjusted my course in this battle. Seeing illnesses, I see also the rudiments of the cure of the Russian Church and I am not ready to add to them the illnesses of the MP. It was precisely my unwillingness in this that turned

me away from thoughts of the consecration of Archm. Valentin and all the more now turns me away from false compromises. But in Russia other possibilities are revealed; a new church populace matures, not fed on our personal "righteousness", but seeking and finding Christ. In this connection, one must see and esteem the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in Russia herself and at the holy places throughout the world (Bari, the Holy Land, etc.). I will not denigrate this love. But at the same time this understanding in no way deprives me of a clear vision and precise evaluation of what is happening in the leading structures of the MP.

For just these reasons I decided upon meeting with the head of the MP. And Vl. Metr. himself subsequently at a session of the Synod confirmed that meetings between bishops are always possible. But our previous correspondence had already been distributed from the Synod office and publicized in the press, which gave rise to no small temptation since confidential correspondence is not for publication.

When, then, the Synod was faced with the necessity to decide whether to receive or not to receive Patriarch Alexis in Germany and at the Mount of Olives, without any debate it was decided to receive him in accordance with the rules of human conduct. And no one sought in this any advantage and did not fear any temporary loss (in any case, there was no talk of this). Apparently the usual understanding prevailed.

And so in the summer of 1997 I went to the Holy Land as a participant in the sessions of the Synod and observed what at first to me seemed utterly inexplicable: Archm. Bartholomew and Abbess Juliana constantly asserted that they acted according to the blessing of the Metropolitan. Shortly after, when the Metropolitan found himself that summer in France, he stated in conversations with clergy in Paris that there was no decree of the Synod on the reception of Patr. Alexis and that Abbess Anna acted improperly. This conversation is on tape. When he returned to New York at a special session of the Synod, Vladyka Metropolitan asserted what he confirmed in a telephone conversation with Bishop Varnava: that it was necessary to receive Patriarch Alexis. However difficult, one has to doubt the logic of the words and actions of Vladyka Metropolitan. More importantly, it seems we lost Hebron because of such zigzags. Then we lost a massive amount of time, energy and means trying to stop the affair begun in Hebron of the transfer of our properties into the hands of the Russian Federation. The matter now has been stopped, albeit temporarily, but will we succeed in regaining Hebron?

When Vladyka Metropolitan telephoned on Thursday, February 5, I was sitting before a television camera giving an interview about the church in Dresden where we had to surrender our property rights. The interview was interrupted. In this conversation Vladyka said to me about this that we are so persecuted, that "stones are not needed" and that we may have to relinquish all the older churches. Grant such an opinion to the First Hierarch, but such a result is totally alien to me because during my consecration I vowed to preserve the properties of the diocese. And in addition, this is one of the duties of any bishop.

The discussions bear fruit for those "on the outside" as well, since the question of our properties (the Tsarist churches) is very important. As a result of our discussions we encountered a greater understanding concerning our position and the realities of the Russian Church. Not being ignorant of property issues concerning the churches from Tsarist times in Germany, Bari and in the Holy Land, I confirm that the reasonable course of our affairs presupposes consistency and such labor which will not be supported by inconstant decisions, is the product of emotions, and in addition abrogates the common [sobornoe] consensus of the hierarchs. But this does not relate only to property.

Vladyka Metropolitan in his letter of 6/24 February (that is, 24 January/ February 4[sic]) declared that I am no longer a member of the Synod, individually abrogating a conciliar [sobornoe] resolution with this. I am grateful for this liberation and underscore that I cannot imagine how I could be responsible in the future for being present in the Synod under such conditions which would not permit, in my view, serious and fruitful work. But in leaving the ruling bishops of our Russian Church Outside Russia, I am in no way able to deny my responsibility for such evident inadequacies in our governance from the point of view of the canons of the Holy Church (amongst which is Apostolic Canon 34) and therefore I call upon all hierarchs to apply every effort to the correction of these inadequacies which are clearly evident in the given case. The issue, of course, is not a matter of my person, but in our ecclesiastical inabilities which require restoration, reordering -- not only for our sakes alone, but for the sake of the benefit of our Russian Church.

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

**COMMENTARY:** From the letter of Archbishop Mark it is obvious that he wrote it when rather agitated: maybe this is why his otherwise immaculate Russian language suffered. At the same time, wishing to demonstrate the total incompetence of Metropolitan Vitaly as President of the Council of Bishops and Synod of Bishops, in a fit of temper (although concealed under sweet-sour declarations of his admiration "before our First Hierarch's podvigs of prayer") Archbishop Mark was forced to show his cards, which we ordinary mortals were not supposed to know of: according to this new Synod theory, the Church is ruled by bishops and the laity are not to be concerned with such matters as agreements made by their bishops behind their backs: it is expected that they will just bow submissively before an accomplished fact.

From his letter we learn something that has been carefully hidden since 1993 from their own flock by the Synod and Council meetings, namely that with the Council's permission intense meetings were begun with representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. Evidently, the late Bishop Gregory was not worried in vain by a short notice printed by

Archbishop Mark in the "Herald of the German Diocese" about his connections with Moscow Patriarchate and sent 2 reports addressed to the First Hierarch as President to the Synod and Council of Bishops, to which there was no response whatsoever. Both of these reports were published in our September, 1997, issue.

Archbishop Mark in his letter mentions on numerous occasions the necessity to keep in touch with "other parts of the Russian Orthodox Church" and first of all with the Moscow Patriarchate. It is very hard to imagine that Archbishop Mark himself and all the members of the Council of Bishops have happened to forget that "other parts of the Russian Church" do not even exist: the former Russian Metropolia long ago renounced her Russian name, and is now called "the Orthodox Church in America" and is an unofficial branch of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the former Metropolitanate in France -- did so even before that (after changing jurisdictions a number of times) -- also has nothing to do with the Russian Church and is a part of a diocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate! The present Catacomb Church in Russia, (unfortunately split into numerous groups, but still undoubtedly existing) was proclaimed by Archbishop Mark long ago to have died out at the end of 70's.

In his drive for union with the Moscow Patriarchate Archbishop Mark refers to the authority of St. John of Shanghai/San Francisco and Archbishop Anthony of Geneva. In the Synod archives there used to be a letter of repentance written by Archbishop John to Metropolitan Anastassy in which he asked pardon for temporarily acknowledging the Moscow Patriarchate when he was deceived by the rumors of the disappearance of Metropolitan Anastassy himself and non-existence of administration of the Synod Of Bishops as well as assurances by the Moscow hierarchs of freedom for the Church in the USSR. And as far as Archbishop Anthony of Geneva is concerned, it is true he used to be very sympathetic to the Moscow Patriarchate. He even was not ashamed to accept in Belgrade a rank of archimandrite from the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate and recognition of this rank demanded a separate decision of the Synod, at that time located in Germany. Yet, Archbishop Mark makes no mention of the entirely different position of all three First Hierarchs of the Church Abroad, although it is not possible that he never has happened to read the testament and will of Metropolitan Anastassy, who asked his fellow bishops to have no communication (even socially) with the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate, and the even more critical attitude toward Moscow Patriarchate of Metropolitan Philaret.

Archbishop Mark devotes two thirds of his letter to the case of Archbishop Valentin, whom he clearly disliked from the very first meeting with him and, complaining about later misunderstandings between Archbishop Lazar and Bishop Valentin, he most certainly does not mention that he himself contributed quite a bit to creating those misunderstandings, which is very obvious from one of the reports made by Archbishop Valentin to the Synod of Bishops. On one occasion Archbishop Mark wrote to the Synod: "Valentin is a bulldozer, which will crush all of us" and in his plan of agreements with Moscow Patriarchate he did everything possible on his part to shield it from this most colorful and dangerous enemy then in the Church Abroad.

In describing last summer's events in the Holy Land, Archbishop Mark tells us that the Synod of Bishops unanimously decreed that the Moscow Patriarch (in other words, KGB agent "Drozdo") be received "according to the rules of human decency." Should one understand this decree of the Synod (as reported by Archbishop Mark) as implying that all the former First Hierarchs -- who did not permit representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate into our convents -- were lacking in human decency?

His information about the loss of Hebron is no less irritating. As is obvious from an interview given to the Canadian Broadcasting Co. by Archpriest Michael Ardov, who recently visited the Holy Land and met with the American consul, who is married to a Russian lady very sympathetic to the ROCOR. Archbishop Mark was a traitor also there. This gentleman promised to use all his influence to help bring this case to a satisfactory conclusion, and gave Archbishop Mark a series of practical pointers and was very disappointed that the latter never heeded one of them. The Committee which traveled to the Holy Land and was chaired by Archbishop Mark, cost the Synod of Bishops \$100,000, and the outrageous letter of the Metropolitan to Arafat, which Archbishop Mark extracted from Metropolitan by raising his voice with him, did infinite harm to the prestige of the Church Abroad as well as to the Metropolitan's.

Due to the efforts of Archbishop Mark who influenced the appointment of Abbess for the convent of the Mt. Olives and now a new Chief of the Mission Fr. Alexis Biron (former rector of the church in Denmark) -- one can be sure that the important positions of superiors in the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission In Jerusalem are in the hands of convinced supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate.

And as far as the benefit in the view of "those on the outside" from agreements with the Patriarchate is concerned -- this is not the first time that it hankered after property entrusted to the Church Abroad which so far successfully defended it in the past without being sullied by agreements with the violators of Divine and human laws.

This letter of Archbishop Mark can be characterized only with the words of Psalmist: "their words are softer than oil, yet they are darts" (Ps. 55: 21)



## COMMUNICATION OF ARCHBISHOP MARK TO CLERGY OF THE GERMAN AND BRITISH DIOCESE

Munich, 17 Feb./2 March, 1998

Now that we are beginning the Great Fast I ask forgiveness of you all, the clergy of the Diocese of Germany and Great Britain, and I ask your prayers for me a sinner and extend to you the wish that you pass the time of the Fast to your spiritual and physical benefit.

Due to the contemporary lightning-fast dissemination of information (both useful and not), the new temptation has become widely known which is overtaking me as a consequence of the "Declaration" issued by me together with the local bishop of the MP, Archbishop Theophan in December of last year. (The text of this Declaration was published in the latest issue of the "Vestnik of the Diocese of Germany" and is ready for publication by the MP.)

After receiving a harsh letter from VI. Vitaly, I had no desire to put my "affairs" out for general discussion. However, since the letter of VI. Metr. Vitaly and a statement by Bishop Kyrill of Seattle and by Evtikhy of Ishimsk have been distributed not only by mail, but still further outcries have appeared on the Internet, likewise repeatedly criticizing the Declaration of incorrect conclusions, I consider it my duty to explain to you my views on this matter.

VI. Metr. wrote to me that I henceforth am no longer a member of the Synod because I allegedly acted without his knowledge, having no right to conduct such dialogues. Due to the venerable age of VI. Metr. it is not surprising that he could forget that the question of meeting with representatives of the MP was decided at Hierarchical Sobors and even the Epistles issued by the Sobors repeatedly expressed the necessity of a thorough study of all the questions separating us as the two parts of the single Russian Orthodox Church, and as well the fact that I delivered reports on our dialogues to the Sobors. This is all noted in the minutes of the Hierarchical Sobors.

Regrettably, VI. Metr. also has forgotten that he cannot exclude a member of the Synod without a decision of a Sobor. In view of the distaste of our First Hierarch to go into such canonical questions, I did not consider it correct to travel to the last convocation of the Hierarchical Synod, letting others unravel this complex situation, and not desiring to "justify myself". At the session of the Synod, held during Cheese-fare Week, other members of the Synod declared that such a decision could only be made by a Sobor, and the question was deferred to the Hierarchical Sobor to be held at the beginning of May.

With this letter I want to make this known to you and also to ask that you put no faith in the growing rumors (nor participate in them). At the present moment nothing more was said or undertaken by the Synod than was already described.

This swelling storm once more demonstrates how destructive and dangerous is our silence concerning the essential questions of ecclesiastical life. In my view, we should discuss these difficulties with that freedom which has been granted us and which we treasure. No problems can be resolved with silence. In any case, those who begin a discussion are from time to time the least qualified. Just today the first serious document from America has reached me in which a fundamental analysis of the problematics is made and indicates the path of resolution within ecclesiastical history and pastoral practice. God grant that our humble efforts in this vineyard have led to at least the serious and careful consideration of our position.

In these holy days of the Great Fast I ask that you sincerely pray that the Lord grant us all the wisdom and love that will preserve and achieve unity within the One Truth which is Christ.

Yours in Christ.

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

**COMMENTARY:** In this communication of Archbishop Mark to his clergy it is difficult to disagree that the First Hierarch according to the canons and consistorial regulations had no right to unilaterally remove him from membership in the Synod of Bishops. In a way, the statement of Archbishop Mark that "by keeping silent no problems are solved" is correct, yet he has in mind not that for some 13 years the Synod of Bishops has kept its flock in the dark about its decisions and decrees, but that it is necessary to resolve the problems with the Moscow Patriarchate. Although actually there is nothing to discuss. Metropolitan Anthony and Anastassy and also a number of other hierarchs of the ROCOR on the former high Russian educational level -- in the most detailed manner condemned the heresy of Sergianism and its undermining of the martyric podvig of the cream of the Russian pre-revolutionary episcopate, who found Sergianism unacceptable and paid for it with their lives. The Moscow Patriarchate not only has no intention of renouncing it but even defends it. Metropolitan Philaret updated the Orthodox stand of the Church Abroad with his exceptional Epistles against Ecumenism. The Moscow Patriarchate does not renounce this either and not only that, but is up to her neck in this mud. How else one can explain how those servants of atheists, the KGB in cassocks, were convinced? They know all this perfectly well, as does Archbishop Mark himself!

From information received on the Internet from a Munich parishioner, it is evident that Archbishop Mark has kept his flock in the dark about his agreements with the Moscow Patriarchate and they found out about the joint meetings with Moscow Patriarchate only from the Internet, where this report was made public. At a recent parish meeting in Munich, one parishioner inquired why Metropolitan Vitaly removed Archbishop Mark from membership in the Synod of Bishops, but he was not permitted to talk. Nor does anyone in Germany know about Metropolitan Vitaly's and Archbishop Mark's



correspondence, also published on the Internet. When it became known, a clergy meeting of the German Diocese to be was called for May 1st at which a "strategy" will be developed for the coming Council of Bishops.

Since Archbishop Mark was in Jerusalem at the end of March, one can assume, that his post of overseer of affairs of the Jerusalem Mission has not changed in any way.

## NON-RUSSIAN CLERGY RESPOND TO THE JOINT DECLARATION OF ARCHBISHOP MARK (ROCA) AND THEOPHAN (MP)

In connection with the joint "Declaration of Archbishops Mark (ROCA) and Theophan (MP) several clerics of the Western-American Diocese with the knowledge of Archbishop Anthony sent an excellently written appeal addressed to Metropolitan Vitaly and members of the Council of Bishops. It states (emphasis in the original):

"Let first of all identify this accord for what it is: IT IS A COMPLETE SURRENDER TO THE IDEOLOGY OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE. One of our Bishops has unilaterally declared to the world that his official position is to reject the historic witness of the Catacomb Church and her confessing hierarchs, to reject the historic witness of Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy, and Philaret, and to reject the entire historic witness of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

"Let us admit with complete honesty what this accord may bring about:

"If we do nothing and remain silent in the face of this, monstrously false statement, IT WILL APPEAR TO ONE AND ALL THAT WE ACCEPT IT AS TRUTH, AND WE WILL THEREBY UNITE OURSELVES IN SOUL TO A LIFE AND THEREBY TO THE FATHER OF LIES, THE DEVIL. Whether or not administrative *submission* (and let us talk fatuously of *union*, these 'Agent Drozdovs' have only one goal -- to destroy us) ever take place, we will kill our souls by subscribing to publicly proclaimed false teaching through a traitorous silence and a private 'peace.'

"Let us see clearly what we must do: Our Synod must, in absolutely certain terms, publicly and officially reject this traitorous statement and command Archbishop Mark to renounce it and never to make any like it in the future. At the same time, we must re-state our *consistent and oft-repeated* positions of Sergianism, ecumenism, and the state of the 'official Orthodox Churches' in the late 20th century. We must re-state our bold witness to the truth of Christ and of Orthodoxy, and our categorical refusal to submit to falsehood under the guise of false love".

Further, these clergymen point by point quite correctly analyze in detail this joint agreement of Archbishops Mark and Theophan.

Unfortunately, this letter of Priests Stephen Allen, Alexis Young and Deacon Christopher Johnson of January 31, 1998 is too long for us to reprint in full. But we would be happy to forward a copy of it to those who would like to have it as well as a copy of an excellent Open Letter by Abbott Adrian (Uellette).

## NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO ON THE NEW LAW IN RUSSIA ABOUT RELIGIONS

On Saturday morning, March 28, on the nationally broadcast program "Weekend Edition" on National Public Radio, Fr. Michael Ardov of the Russian Orthodox Free Church under Vl. Valentin of Suzdal was interviewed concerning the present application of the new Law on Religions passed recently by Yeltsin and the Duma with the support of the MP. Fr. Michael is forced to hold services in a mortuary in St. Petersburg because as part of a religious group not registered with the Soviet government 15 years as the law stipulates, the ROFC is not permitted to own property. They live in constant fear of not being allowed to even meet at all. The report noted that ROCOR parishes are also under threat.

The report went on to state that sects like Evangelicals, Mormons and Hari Krishnas are not so harassed, for as one commentator put it "the salvation of Russia is poor enforcement of bad laws." The President of the Mormon Church in Russia, Mr. Jarvis (a very Russian name!), observed that the law is not applied to large mainstream international religions. The NPR reporter said, however, the law is being used solely to persecute local Orthodox rivals to the MP. This is a clever tactic by the MP since it lets American lawmakers who might want to deny monetary aid to Russia, the NPR story noted, if the law is enforced upon typically American confessions, off the hook. Thus even secular, left-leaning American reporters can see the Moscow Patriarchate for what it is.

## FROM LIFE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX FREE CHURCH

Departure from the ROFC into unauthorized company

In July, 1996, Bishop Arseny of Briansk and Tula left the Russian Orthodox Free Church after he performed several uncanonical ordinations within the Diocese of Suzdal and Vladimir and refused to respond to several invitations to attend a Synod meeting in order to explain his violation of the 35th Apostolic Canon and instead of repentance made an effort to join the ROCA, which refused him. At this time Bishop Arseny remains in an uncanonical status (for details see our issue for July-August 1996 # 5).

Unfortunately, without any explanation he was followed by another hierarch of the ROFC, Bishop Alexander of Kazan and Mariisk.

According to an axiom of the Holy Fathers, one unrepented sin is inevitably followed by a number of others. Just recently it became known that both of those bishops were accepted by the self-ordained "Patriarch Volodymir of Kiev". This "patriarch" two years ago went to Constantinople with expensive gifts, hoping to gain recognition there, but even the greedy Bartholomew, who welcomes gifts and other's souls, refused to recognize him. It would be interesting to know with what this Ukrainian "samosviat" tempted these unfortunates?

#### About a church in the village Pavlovskoye

Less than 10 miles from Suzdal there is a village, Pavlovskoye, which is mentioned in the chronicles for the first time in 1328 as a place belonging to Prince Ivan Kalita. In 1805 to replace 2 wooden churches, one of brick one with a bell tower was built in this village. Today this village has a population of 665. During the era of persecution of the Church the building deteriorated terribly: inside it were mounds of concrete, the roof disappeared, as well as the bell tower and porch. In 1994 due to efforts by clergy in the Suzdal Diocese of the ROFC the church was registered in the local governmental office for the village of Pavlovskoye as dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The village government of Pavlovskoye was very supportive as well as the Suzdal regional administration. On March 15th Interdepartmental Committee for Preservation of Cultural Monuments consigned these ruins to the Diocese for unlimited use free of charge. After the church through efforts of clergy and villagers was fully restored outside and inside, the Moscow Patriarchate demanded the immediate surrender of this church into its hands. After a long litigation based upon supposed legal discrepancies - amazingly, the Patriarchate lost this case and since no appeal was made within a month, the case was settled and the church remained in hands of the villagers, who refused to listen to Patriarchate propaganda. But this does not mean at all, that the troubles of this parish are over: the Patriarchate has already taken steps to initiate new litigation in the hopes of getting a church which was restored neither by its funds nor its hands.

#### A ray of hope for the Latvian Orthodox Free Church

In February 1998 (after how many times in recent years?) the President of the Diocesan Council of the Latvian Church, Abbott Philaret, delivered to the investigating magistrate Miss Leicenko in the Office of Procurator of Rehabilitations and "Spec-Serv" (Sovietese for Special Services) a petition of registration with appended material of 146 pages. It is stressed in the cover letter that in all the democratic countries where numerous Orthodox patriarchates function only in Latvia is there a coercive demand to belong to the Moscow Patriarchate.

Miss Leicenko forwarded all the documentation to the local representative in the Seime Mr. Paulim Klavina with a cover letter stating that "since the procurator has no right of legislative initiative, the above mentioned declaration is being forwarded to help resolve the issue by the introduction by the legislature of necessary changes."

This is the first time that a representative of the Latvian government has forwarded such documentation for a change in the law without just arbitrarily refusing registration.

#### WHAT THE ECUMENISTS IN THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE KEEP SILENT ABOUT

Quite accidentally we received an issue of the bulletin of "Ecumenical News" which published the resolutions of the regular Bilateral Commission of Representatives of the Vatican and the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Vatican was represented by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Moscow Patriarchate by Metropolitan Kyrill, Chairman of the Department for the External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. Representatives of the Uniates and the Ukrainian Transcarpathians were also invited to this meeting.

It took place in Bari (the place where St. Nicholas' relics rest) between May 7-8 in 1997. It was set to coincide with festival in honor of the translation of the Saint's relics. As it is stated in the bulletin "**both delegations participated in the festivities dedicated to this memorable event**" although there are no specifics about the manner of participation.

At the meeting the problems regarding the relationship between Uniates and Orthodox in Ukraine were considered.

The first paragraph says that "Both parties stated the need to activate efforts of reconciliation and eradicate every form of violence, whether it be physical, verbal or moral. The first step to take is to put an end to everything that can foment division, contempt and hatred between the Churches." This refers to the Statement of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church (signed in Balamand in 1993, par. 21).

Paragraph 2 discusses a number of questions which arise amongst the faithful of both Churches and that in accord with the Balamand Agreement "it would be opportune to carry out a detailed theological analysis of the basic

ecclesiological and pastoral aspects of the document. The Balamand Statement should not become a factor of new divisions between the faithful of our Churches."

Paragraph 3 states that *"Both parties stressed that it is inadmissible that expressions in the spirit of nationalism and confessional intolerance should appear in the mass media and especially in the ecclesiastical press, and they call upon the faithful of both Churches to abstain from sharp and insulting statements."*

Paragraph 6 says that *"In difficult situations which are connected with the division of ecclesiastical buildings and church properties in particular where in one place there is only one church and two communities of different size, one Orthodox and one Greek-Catholic, both parties recommend that the principle of majority be applied, as was agreed by the Delegations of the Holy See and Moscow Patriarchate in 1990"*.

Paragraph 7 states that both parties will seek a peaceful coexistence and *"the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine establish a joint working group, headed by two bishops, one from each Church."*

And finally, they agreed to declare that, in view of the forthcoming celebrations connected with 2 millennia of Christianity, they have to intensify their work together to ease tensions between Catholics and the Patriarchal "Orthodox."

With this agreement with the Catholics about church properties and church buildings, the Moscow Patriarchate treacherously forces its Orthodox flock (basing this on majority rule) to attend Uniate churches!

In connection with the treacherous Agreement, signed by Catholics and the Moscow Patriarchate and also now with the practical results of it at the meeting in Bari, it is worthwhile to mention the excellent interview given to the newspaper "Radonezh" on December, 1997 in # 21 (65), by Bishop Augustine of Lvov and Drogobych from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

A reporter, Vladimir Poliakov, asked Bishop Augustine what his feelings are toward the Balamand Agreement, since he is a member of the Theological Committee of the Moscow Patriarchate and the President of the same Committee for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

The answer given by Bishop Augustine casts some light on the work of this Committee. As he said: "During spring of the current year there was a regular meeting of the Theological Committee, as it was announced in July's bulletin of the Department of Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. In it there was analyzed the Balamand Agreement. In the meeting there participated 10 persons, although the commission consists of 30 members. Maybe this was a meeting of Presidium only? Until now I know nothing definite about it. In any case, I took no part in those deliberations."

Asked by the reporter if Bishop Augustine was invited, he replied: "There was no invitation. Probably some circumstances forced the initiators of these deliberations to have it proceed with very limited members of the Committee." Bishop Augustine believes that the Balamand Agreement should be analyzed in detail and "have every 'i' dotted" about the Council to be held in 1999. At the last Council of the Moscow Patriarchate, Bishop Augustine boldly defended the Orthodox position. From his report to that Sobor it became known that the Balamand Agreement is so scandalous that it was hidden for 3 full years from their own hierarchy!

The reporter was also interested in the opinion of Bishop Augustine about the Catholics. To this question he gives a 100% Orthodox answer: "As far as I am personally concerned, I have the following opinion about the Catholics. After 1054, as far as I am concerned, it was still possible to speak about the Catholic Church as a schismatic group which departed from the one Orthodox Church. But as soon as Catholics began to convene their own Councils and termed them 'ecumenical' - that's it, it became a heresy. This touches on the Orthodox teaching about the Church. Even more so later on, when overtly false Catholic dogmas were accepted by the Vatican. I don't know why so there are such sophistries about this question, but in my opinion, there always was an Orthodox approach: if schismatics change something in the dogmatic teachings, they simply become heretics".

In this interview Bishop Augustine showed himself to be not only a brave hierarch, but he also displayed a knowledge of the canons and no fear in following them. Metropolitan Vladimir (of Kiev in the MP) was invited to Romania for the 500th jubilee of the founding of Niamets Monastery (by St. Paisy Velichkovsky), but could not participate and asked Bishop Augustine to represent him. A certain "Metropolitan" Peter (Peduraru) was also invited to this celebration, who had been a bishop in the Moscow Patriarchate and left it for the Romanians. For this he was suspended. Initially very surprised to see a suspended bishop and then to show his indignation, Bishop Augustine removed his vestments and refused to serve despite persistent attempts not only by Romanian hierarchs, but also by the all-powerful representative of the Moscow Patriarchate from the Department of Foreign Relations, Archimandrite Yelisey (Ganaba).

Somehow the question poses itself: what makes a hierarch, so steadfast in doctrinal and canonical matters, remain in the obviously uncanonical and heretical Moscow Patriarchate?

## PROTESTANTS DECIDE TO FAST

Newspaper "The New York Times" of February 8th published a long article, entitled "In hope of spiritual revival, a call to fast." The article by Laurie Goodstein is written very sympathetically and informs us that prominent leaders of the

Evangelical Protestants, such as Bill Bright and Pat Robertson, who have their own radio station, persuaded more than 2 million fellow Christians to fast from March 1 through April 9th (Holy Thursday on the Western calendar).

These Protestants, whose tradition long ago lost any concept of fasting, decided to try it for 40 days in imitation of the Prophet Moses and the Saviour Himself, since they realize that America has lost any concept of morality. Mr. Bright said that "As a nation we are faced with the gravest crisis in our more than 200 year history because we have rejected God and His Commandments... Judgement has already begun with rapid social disintegration during the last three decades, but far worse awaits us. Unless we believers truly repent, further judgement and ultimate destruction looms drastically ahead."

One of the senior Baptist pastors Ronnie Floyd said: "These are desperate spiritual moments in the life of our nation... And the most dramatic sign of repentance is to go without food... We deny the most natural thing for our body desires, which is food, in order to persuade God to do something supernatural in our lives".

The Protestant pastors became alarmed by a rise in such sins as mass unbelief, adultery, abortion, suicide, murder and drug addiction. Yet, having no Orthodox tradition of fasting, they will fast according to their own understanding. Some decided to eat nothing for 40 days and live on fluids only, some gave up their favorite meals and some will eat but little.

There were some who objected to such a call to fasting, claiming that the Gospel warns against talking about it.

No matter how these Protestants fast, one has to salute such a healthy beginning in the hope of asking Lord for mercy and that He will deliver them from tribulations. The people of Ninevah, who did not know the true God, believed the word of the Prophet, and their King declared a fast not only for his nation, but also the animals and we know, that they were pardoned.

As the Protestant leader Bright said: "Prayer has great power, but fasting with prayer has infinitely more power."