

CHURCH NEWS

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**The staff of "Church News" greets our readers on the Feast of the Nativity of Christ
and wishes all the best for the coming year: A BLESSED NATIVITY AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

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A word from the staff:

We are enclosing an envelope with our address and ask our readers to kindly support the publication of "Church News." As before, we are not setting any required subscription fee for our publication, but in the future we will be able to send it (excluding to Russia) only if you respond in some manner, or in cases of insufficient means to make a donation, you notify us that you would like to receive "Church News."

We also ask that anyone who no longer wants to receive "Church News" let us know, so that we be spared any unnecessary expenses and so they will not get any unwanted mail.

Our publication has existed for 12 years now exclusively funded by the donations of our readers. Each individual copy costs us \$.60, not counting postage and envelopes.

We are especially grateful to those of our readers who can help us not only in reply to our annual appeal, but who of their own good will send us donations during the rest of the year.

NATIVITY GREETING
from Metropolitan Vitaly,
the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad
Christ is born!
Glorify Him!

I greet you all on this joyous and great festival. The Almighty God Himself becomes a man - the God-man, in order to console us with His Divine compassion in the often grievous lot of our earthly life. In the Old Testament we were given simple commandments: not to kill, not to steal, not to indulge our passions of the flesh, and so on. In the New Testament the Lord gives us the commandments of Beatitudes, which we proclaim when we sing them at every Liturgy: "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." Finally, in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Holy Apostle Paul puts before us further new commandments relating to our daily spiritual conduct: "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. For everything give thanks. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (5: 16-18). "Without ceasing" can have no other meaning than "to pray without ever stopping." We are left with the question: how can we pray without ceasing? With the mind? No, because our mind soon becomes tired and stops praying. However, it is precisely with the mind that this real labour must begin. Seeing our labors, the Lord in miraculous fashion draws this prayer down into the heart, which is the source of man's spiritual energy, and then the whole man prays. The Holy Fathers affirm that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself prays together with us to His Heavenly Father, "Who is greater than I." This is the real school of prayer. I wish for all of you to enter this Great School, where through prayer the Lord Himself will teach all things. This is the Highest School of all schools and admission to it is always open to everyone.

I should also greet you all with the second millennium of the existence of the Church of Christ on earth. Our Lord Jesus Christ never founded any such thing as "Christianity," but He established His Church, and He promised that it would remain unassailable and invincible until His dread Second Coming. In other words, the members of this Church are the true Christians. And this means that the whole spiritual meaning of our earthly life is this, that we should be and abide in this Church of Christ, which is my heartfelt wish to all of you. Amen.

Metropolitan Vitaly

Nativity of Christ 1999-2000

NOTE FROM CHURCH NEWS:

We received the text of the Metropolitan's address from one of the parish priests of the ROCOR. Since it had no letterhead or title, we it took upon ourselves to call it "Nativity Greeting from Metropolitan Vitaly, First Hierarch of the ROCOR."

NATIVITY EPISTLE
of Archbishop of Vladimir and Suzdal to faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church
"Christ is born: glorify Him!..."

Nothing can measure the love of God for us, sinners, from the very beginning of our lives and to our last breath. God's love toward us is always clearly visible in His constant care for us, if we are attentive to our salvation.

From the day of the Presentation into the temple of the All Holy Theotokos, the Holy Church in a festive manner reminds us of the approaching feast of Christ's Nativity: "Christ is born - glorify Him!..." And from that blessed day the Church of Christ unceasingly reminds us of the forthcoming holiday, calling everyone of us to glorify the Divine Child not only with the mouth, but also with the heart and all the mind, and especially with good deeds, which are so necessary in our hard times.

The holiday of the Presentation of Theotokos is especially precious to us. Ten years ago, during days of this holiday, our Church began its departure from a Babylonian captivity to meet Christ the Divine Child.

Two thousand years have passed since the world learned that for our sakes and our salvation God the Father sent to fallen humanity His Only Begotten Son, that everyone who believeth in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life.

Almost two thousand years have passed, since the world learned about the Christian Faith through the preaching of the Holy Apostles and the Martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for the triumph of Orthodoxy. And for just as many years the faith of the Holy Apostles and Martyrs has been opposed by the false faith, about which the Holy Apostles warned:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve, so your minds should be corrupted... For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached..." (2 Cor. 11: 3-4)

With every day we are nearing the jubilee year. And more and more often we put to ourselves a question: what good deeds have we done for the sake of our own salvation as well as of our neighbors? More and more we feel pain in our heart about life spent without faith in God and good deeds. What will we bring before the throne of the Judge? What will we answer to God and what sentence will we hear?

Yes, we were not faithful Disciples of Christ, we were not confessors of Orthodoxy. We lived not for the sake of God, not for our salvation, but for the sake of temporary happiness, forgetting about the eternal Kingdom of God's Glory!

Every hour and every minute our inner voice, the judge of our poor conscience, reminds us of how far we are from the salvific evangelical commandments which have been brought by the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ.

Almost all our life we follow not the path of confessing Christ, but the path of compromise, justifying our actions and with this we delude ourselves and establish a lie. "If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached... ye might well bear with him" (2 Cor. 11: 3-4). Such a different Jesus is being preached when it is stated that all faiths have the same God, the same Christ. But Orthodox Christians do not have the same God nor the same Christ with all those who do not preserve Christ's and the Apostle's faith. The preachers of another Christ insist that it is necessary to be united with apostates from Christ's faith for the sake of love. But such "love" always brings the opposite results.

At all times, over the span of thousands of years there were heard groans, tears were shed and Christian blood flowed. The twentieth century is especially distinguished by the most cruel persecution of Christians for the sake of creating happiness on earth -- at the orders of a God-opposing government there poured out the blood of Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, who sacrificed their lives for the Orthodox faith, the Tsar and the Fatherland.

While remembering that the 20th century has characterized itself with apostasy and its accompanying perfidy, hatred, cruelty, blood-thirstiness and other evil deeds, we have no right to be pacified by the realization of our sinfulness alone. The realization of our own sinfulness is only the first step toward repentance, this is an inner ascertaining of sinful deeds which overpowered us and which interfere with the awareness of the depth of our fall and interfere with the raising of our spiritual insight to be able to say to ourselves: "Stop!"

Today and only today, if we seek salvation for ourselves as well as for our neighbors, we have to offer to the Lord our repentance and bring forth the fruits of our repentance so that the All Merciful Lord would not be angry with us but would disregard our sins.

During the days left of this 20th century we should strengthen our prayers and pray not only for prosperity and peaceful life, but also plead with the Lord that He would forgive our children, who were not brought into God's temples. And especially pray for our parents, who have departed to another world and who trusted the anarchists, who betrayed Holy Orthodox Church, Orthodox Tsar the Martyr and God's people

Beloved in God, fathers, brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ!

From all my heart I greet you on the great and incomprehensible holy day of the Nativity of Christ! Prayerfully I wish you, from the Divine Child Christ lying in a manger, acquisition of the Holy Spirit.

With humility of heart and tears in the eyes, let us turn to the Divine Child Christ: O Our most glorious Jesus -- hard times came upon us, when the people rose up against itself, when brotherly blood flowed over the Russian nation, when Orthodox Russia and her martyred people are threatened with hunger and cold, when humanity is covered with wounds and the flesh is in pain, when every misfortune falls upon us and earthquakes happen, when the world is nearing catastrophe and Thy judgement is at our doors, -- do not remember our lawlessness, forgive the sins of our fathers and forefathers, forgive us Judas' sin of perfidiousness and false witness, the sin of the Tsar's murder and of treason and idolatry! We dare not look up to Thy holy icon, but we only pray and plead: show us Thy mercy and do not leave us to perish, so that Thy name may be glorified in the Holy Trinity and be always worshipped unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Invoking upon you God's blessing and asking for your holy prayers,

Valentin, Archbishop of Vladimir and Suzdal

1999-2000 city of Suzdal

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY OF A PARISH IN OTTAWA

"The Orthodox Herald" in Canada in its November issue # 8 in an abridged manner reported the events regarding the seizure by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Holy Protection Church in Ottawa. This Herald is issued by monthly. It said in particular: "At the moment we send out our Herald for printing, clergy of our diocese conducts the services in the morning and in the evening. Up to the present time we are obliged to request that our church be opened for us. Until last Saturday we could serve one vigil service and one thanksgiving service with the akathist but we could not serve a Liturgy due to unfavorable circumstances."

Unfortunately, it is impossible to clarify this declaration of the diocesan administration and find out the true situation of the church seized by the Moscow Patriarchate.

Meanwhile, a newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" (Russian Herald) published in Russia in its # 42-43 (436-437) issue published an appeal entitled "A new parish of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ottawa asks all the fellow faithful for help." The appeal starts with the words:

"The Administrator of the Patriarchal parishes in Canada, Archbishop Mark of Kashira, the Rector of the Memorial Church of the Protection of the Theotokos in Ottawa, Fr. Dimitry Sever and the parish Council turn to the

Orthodox faithful throughout the world with the following letter:..." Then it is stated, that according to a "Decision of the general parish meeting held in September, 1999, the parish of the Memorial Church of the Protection of the Holy Theotokos in the capitol of Canada, Ottawa, reunited with the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate. 83 parishioners (out of 100 active parish members) voted for reunion with the Mother Church and 3 members abstained from voting...

"This joyful for occasion for all the parishioners became darkened by the information that Bishop Michael of Toronto filed a law suit in the name of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and her Synod. He started a law suit against the church in Ottawa in order to deprive the parish of its church building and property. The case was heard in Ottawa court. Unfortunately, the court deprived the parish of the church until the end of the case. As per this decision, the management of the church building and other property has to be regulated by the Parish council, but a priest is to be appointed by the Russian Church Abroad."

In connection with this, according to the patriarchal parishioners, the parish is looking for another place for worship and is experiencing financial difficulties.

From these two controversial announcements one may draw only one conclusion: unfortunately the information given by the administration of the "Diocesan Herald in Canada" is suffering from uncertainty (or reticence), while the appeal of Moscow Patriarchate can not avoid some false statements, because it is common knowledge that the Moscow Patriarchate is used to lies. As per the appeal of Bishop Michael, published by us in # 6 (82) issue, on October 4th the Judge upheld "the rights of the Canadian Bishop and the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR to be indisputable." Yet, Archpr. Sever sent the case to the appellate court.

We will keep our readers informed on the future details of this court case.

ABOUT THE MAGAZINE "VOZVRASHCHENIYE" WHICH DEFINED ITSELF

We have seen only one or two issues of the magazine "Vozvrashcheniye" ("Return") "the first printed organ of Russian parishes under the jurisdiction of the Church Abroad, published in Russia by the Russian people." Those few accidentally received issues gave no opportunity of being able to arrive at some idea of the goals and point of view of this magazine. Yet, one of our readers was kind enough to send us a subscription form, published by the representative of this publication in USA, signed by Galina Tunick-Rosniansky. In this offer there are clearly laid out the aims of "Vozvrashcheniye."

As it turns out, "Such is the name given to our magazine. A word, wonderfully capacious. It did not come to us immediately, but when it was discovered, it became clear to us: as of now, this word will be one of those few, which will help us to build our themes and positions. Thus "vozvrashcheniye" in the framework of our magazine is the return to our Holy Fatherland, trampled upon and profaned: the return to heritage of the Holy Fathers, destroyed and plundered, but living and great, still capable of bringing rebirth to her prodigal sons... The return to the Mother Church in the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity: to longed for reunion within the church borders of the three forcibly separated parts of Russian Orthodox Church... Return to what is preserved and saved... Return of those, who were expelled for the sake of Truth... [this is one literal way of expressing in Russian, "those persecuted for righteousness sake"] Return forever, because for us Orthodox there is not and never will be another Fatherland save our Russia. (Emphasized and underlined by "CH. N.")

Well, the goals of this magazine are declared with total clarity - it is union with the Moscow Patriarchate. It is only not clear, why these Russian patriots nevertheless decided to exit from Moscow Patriarchate and join the ROCA, while they do not share her former basic stand? There also arises another question: Why the hierarchy of the ROCA keeps quiet and takes no measures against the obviously pro-Moscow ideology of its "first printed organ" in Russia?

It seems, that our hierarchy and distinguished clergy and public representatives have stopped reading anything but their local newspapers! And who knows, maybe they themselves sympathize with such a "Vozvrashcheniye" (Return).

FLOOD IN DORMITION OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS CHURCH IN JERUSALEM

As reported from Jerusalem, three days of pouring rain resulted in a flood of Dormition Church of the Theotokos in Jerusalem. Rainwater, coming down from the slopes of the Mt. of Olives filled the church up to the chandeliers. At the time of the flood 5 Greek monks and nuns were present in the church which is located underground down a long flight of steps. They were saved by lowering down to them some ropes.

It seems almost every year there is a minor flood in this church, but this year such a terrible flood resulted because in the surrounding is new construction and the piled up debris blocked the drains.

According to the local church administration, many religious valuables perished in this flood. It is still not quite sure if the famous and very much revered icon of Theotokos survived.

A secretary of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, Metropolitan Timotheos stated that water in the church rose to 50 feet (15 meters) and even on the next day the muddy water was still 2 feet high.

Israeli firefighters and police first saved the monastics in the church and then started to pump the water with three or four hoses.

AN IMPORTANT ADMISSION BY THE ABBESS OF MT. OF OLIVES CONVENT

"The Herald of the German Diocese" in issue # 4 for year 1999 published an interview given to the editors of this magazine by the abbess of Mt. of Olives Convent, Abbess Moiseya. In this current issue, the interview of Abbess Moiseya is published, while another, by Abbess Elisabeth of Gethsemane is due in the next issue.

To a question about "how many priests there are in the community?" the Abbess answered, two: Priestmonk Andronik from Australia and "Priestmonk Elias, who came from Kiev." Regarding a question on replacements for the staff of Mt. of Olives Convent and answering to the direct question: "do these replacements come from our parishes in Russia, or from the Moscow Patriarchate?" the Abbess Moiseya answered: "Mainly from the Moscow Patriarchate, but there are some from our Church too, for example one sister from Kiev."

It is common knowledge, even without Abbess' Elisabeth' interview, that the convent of Gethsemane has plenty of nuns and novices who have come from Russia.

Having already learned from the tragic experience with the Monastery of Hebron, where "at the right moment" a traitor novice from the MP happened to be on hand, must one come to the sad conclusion that at present in every one of our convents in the Holy Land, we have a "Trojan horse"?

ANXIOUS CHRISTMAS OF THE 2ND MILLENNIUM

According to the bulletin "Ecumenical Press International," of December 15th, 1999, December 25th/January 7th, 2000, in Bethlehem, on the day of the Nativity of Christ there will be conducted special very festive services.

On that day the arrival of all the Eastern "Orthodox" Patriarchs is expected, but also of the Presidents of the predominantly Orthodox countries. Among the invited guests is also Milosevic, but it is very doubtful that he would come, because he has grounds to believe he will be arrested as a war criminal. It is expected that Yeltsin will come. Arafat spent the whole month of November in the Moscow, he also met there with Alexis Ridiger "Drozdov." He spoke on the telephone for some 20 minutes with Yeltsin and, as he said on a press conference given in Moscow, Arafat himself said that "the President confirmed that he would visit holy sites in Palestine as earlier planned."

A personal invitation from the mayor of Jerusalem Ehud Olmert to attend the festivities was received by the President of the Orthodox Palestine Society, Bishop Anthony (Grabbe). The invitation was sent to the "Russian Excavations" by messenger.

Ridiger himself is expected to arrive with more than a thousand "pilgrims." He is scheduled to leave Moscow on January 2nd and all celebrations are to begin on January 4th. He will leave Jerusalem on January 7th, right after the end of the service in order to be in Moscow to serve in the Christ the Saviour Cathedral.

According to the program published by the Jerusalem Patriarchate, on January 4 the heads of the Churches and presidents of the nations are to be received by the Israel's President Ezer Weizman and the mayor of Jerusalem Ehud Olmert. It is expected that the senior officials of state will be present and will attend a concert of the Orthodox music in the theater.

The bulletin points out that this assembly of all the heads of the "Orthodox" Churches and also heads of governments of Orthodox states is an unprecedented historical event. One can not help but think, may not this "precedent" be a repetition of Hebron's story for the ROCOR!

It is interesting to note that one of the Israeli thinkers Meron Benvenisti published an article in one of the influential Israeli newspapers "Haarez" in which he says that "The Palestinians are exploiting the Israel failure artfully and snatching the Holy Land away from the Jews. If the Israelis flinch at the idea of the Christian attachment to the Holy Land, it will henceforth be identified with Palestine."

Meanwhile, the agency SOP (Service Orthodoxe de Presse) reported that in Jerusalem again, between June 12 and 19th, including the Feast of Pentecost, there will be an pan-Orthodox conference on the theme "The Orthodox Church in the Third Millennium." The Greek Church scheduled a solemn Liturgy in the Athens cathedral, which will be attended again by all the heads of the "Orthodox" Churches.

The Church of Sinai, which was until recently quite Orthodox, announced that she has scheduled an inter-religious conference, which, besides Orthodox, will have Monophysite, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Jewish participants!

The Moscow Patriarchate decided to mark the new millennium with the canonization of some New Martyrs, consecration of Christ the Saviour Cathedral and the publication of a 25 volume dictionary!

THE FIGHT AGAINST ORTHODOXY

A bulletin "Nouvelles du Monde Orthodoxe," published in French by a cleric of the Western European Diocese, Fr. Michael Artzimovitch relates that the Austrian minister of finance, Johannes Farnleitner, publicly declared that "Europe begins where Orthodoxy ends." As is well known, Orthodoxy is a universal religion and has no borders.

This Austrian minister was for a long time a member of a militant Catholic group (KMBO) that supports the apacy and should have shown some respect toward the Church which their Pope calls "a sister Church." This declaration was opposed by many Catholics, but, nevertheless, the minister signed it.

Metropolitan Michael, the Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and a member of Council of Christian Churches in Austria, expressed his disappointment that the press gives a negative picture of the Serbian Church by writing "that Serbian nationalism will cease to exist only when the Serbian Church will disappear."

In 1997 Henry Kissinger speaking about Greece declared that "the Greeks are difficult to govern, so we have to hit them in the deepest parts of their cultural heritage. I think we have to strike their language, their religion, so then they have nothing any more to say in the Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, and Middle East, which are strategic and vital zones for US politics." We can see that the target is not only Milosevic, but Orthodoxy, says Fr. Michael.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE CONSCIENCE by Archpriest Michael Ardov

I subscribe to the Jordanville publication "Pravoslavnaya Rus" ("Orthodox Russia"), but it arrives in Moscow badly delayed. We did not receive issue # 16 for August of 1999 untill November!

In this issue I got interested in a section entitled "News from Russia" where mention is made of "a routine visit of His Grace Bishop Michael into our country." Among other things it stated: "On the northern region of Rostov, Bishop Michael visited Ust-Medvedski village.... At present, the Moscow Patriarchate established a monastery there, whose inhabitants trustingly and respectfully met him, asking only one question: "What should we do?" "Live according to your conscience," was the Bishop's answer.

I believe that during the entire history of Orthodoxy not one hierarch gave to monastics such a short and uncertain advice, not once mentioning the Lord's commandments, the Church canons and monastic rules. It is even more surprising that the "trusting monks" belong to the Moscow Patriarchate, to a more than dubious jurisdiction which is deeply involved with "pan-heresy of ecumenism." One can just imagine what the hierarchs of blessed memory, Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy and Philaret, would have said.

Regarding this issue, I also have to pose a question for Bishop Michael of Toronto: was his own conscience clear when he accepted this high rank particularly in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad?

REGARDING "SUZDAL SKETCHES"

The existence of several dioceses, headed in Russia by Valentin (Rousanzov), Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir, from the very first days of its existence, even long ago with just two small parishes, provoked an amazing hatred toward the then Archimandrite Valentin.

Hardly had he managed to enter the orbit of life in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, into whose fold he was received by Metropolitan Vitaly in 1990, when an organized hunt began, and unfortunately, not by the Moscow Patriarchate alone - which quite naturally was to be expected. Unfortunately, two hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad started totally unfounded slander. Archbishop Mark of Berlin, one may say from the very first acquaintance with Archimandrite Valentin reported that he knew of his debaucheries, organized orgies, luxurious living and so on. By the way, at that time he did not think it necessary to accuse him of service in the KGB, but only to give his own characterization of the archimandrite just received from the Moscow Patriarchate, when he wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly that "Archimandrite Valentin, in everything -- in his behavior and mentality -- is a typical product of the Soviet Patriarchate." Accusations of belonging to the KGB, which was widely written up in the Russian and foreign press, and even private mail, that supposedly "documentation about it existed in the Synod" -- came relatively later and, probably was put into circulation by the Moscow Patriarchate itself. Less than three years after the consecration of Archimandrite Valentin to the episcopate of Suzdal, the same Archbishop Mark warned the Council of Bishops that "Valentine is a tank which will crush us under its weight."

From the very first days of his acquaintance, Archbishop Mark was not ashamed to blame Archimandrite Valentin even for having in his quarters a number of good icons. As it became known a bit later, these icons were ones he managed to save from the churches which were destroyed by the atheists and now decorate the walls of the churches he restored, and his "luxurious quarters" had no hot water and only a bathroom, with merely a simple shower! Doubtlessly, Archbishop Mark himself lived much more luxuriously than Fr. Valentin did.

As soon as Archimandrite Valentin was ordained bishop for Suzdal, new slander followed, this time on from Bishop Barnabas, who had a grudge against him for accepting a very large and rich parish on Naginsk, which refused to be under his authority, but insisted on remaining under Bishop Valentin. To begin with, Bishop Barnabas brought to the Council of Bishops a cartoon, signed by certain A. Stilmark (a member of organization "Pamyat" and a parish of Moscow Patriarchate) with an accusation of immorality. Unfortunately, the Council of Bishops, in violation of all the canonical and ecclesiastical procedures, immediately started to investigate this slander. Then a short while later, after wasting more than two years on this "investigation", the Council of Bishops held in France formally informed Bishop Valentin that his case is closed for lack of evidence. But at the very next Council of Bishops, Bishop Valentin was incriminated with acceptance of the Naginsk parish and its rector, Archimandrite Adrian, who was also, without any supporting evidence, accused of immorality. For this acceptance (without an investigation or court procedure of Archimandrite Adrian) - Bishop Valentine was nearly defrocked and "mercy" was shown to him and he was retired on grounds of illness, although the "ill" Bishop never complained about his health and did not request a retirement.

It was evidently necessary to render harmless and destroy the "tank" which (as Archbishop Mark understood right away) would stand in the path of plans to unify with the Moscow Patriarchate.

When his exit from the ROCOR forced by the Synod of Bishops itself took place and Bishop Valentin had to organize under different circumstances, for a while, it seems he was forgotten. The Synod of Bishops was satisfied that without an investigation and a court procedure he was defrocked in absentia and Moscow Patriarchate, hoping that now "a Suzdal schism" will also will die away - also was not in a hurry with equally illegal (as on part of ROCOR) defrocking

Yet, during the spring of the current year the attack against Archbishop Valentine took on unheard of dimensions. He was denounced in various publications of Moscow Patriarchate as well as "catacomb True Orthodox Christians" and, of course, in private letters.

The "Moscow Journal" # 9 published a six page long article by I. Mager, entitled "Suzdal Sketches." The writer is at a loss for the words to sufficiently abuse Archbishop Valentine personally and all his work.

One must believe that this unexpected angry howl was evoked by nothing but by the resolution of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church made at the beginning of Great Lent of the current year, in which there was a decision "about Hierarchs and representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, who received their ranks through the mediation of the government and department of state defense and who did not repent of it in a churchly manner. (See "Ch. N." # 5, August-October 1999).

Mager begins his article with a badly distorted history of the relationship of Archbishop Valentin with the ROCOR and then treats with irony the name of "The Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church."

Without doubt, the author of this article is well aware of what difficulties at present arise with the registration of any Church and even a parish if they do not belong to the Moscow Patriarchate. This name, in a literal sense of this word was forced upon Archbishop Valentine by the Justice Department with which such registrations take place. The Church under Archbishop Valentine uses this name only in the most official communications with the government authorities.

The author asserts that he spoke with lay people, clergy, museum and library personnel and gained a very "oppressive impression," because... Archbishop Valentin has created a "peculiar fifth column which has as a target the disintegration of the national state system [?!] the main direction of whose activities is to undermine the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church and its head."

Mager also writes that "it has been reported that he has a habit of pompously walking the streets accompanied by his 'faithful' while staring 45 degrees over the heads of people", and then tells the naive reader that Archbishop Valentin "is asserted" to be the richest Suzdal' citizen and therefore, "one can imagine, how much his administration depends on his 'charity.' " It is self-explanatory that the "the huge amounts of money" come "from America and sympathetic organizations!" It is worth noting that much of Mager's article is based not on personal knowledge or facts, but only on "it is related" or "it is asserted!" Any self-respecting journalist would not write an article in such a style and with such a lack of data.

When mentioning the good relations of Archbishop Valentin with the local authorities, the author complains that after he spoke with the city's mayor, he heard: "Archbishop Valentin, in the world Anatole Petrovich Rousancov is a deputy of the city council, an honorary citizen of the city of Suzdal. About no project which his Church has are there any questions. He is charitable toward children's and pre-school establishments, and, well, towards anybody! The man has tremendous authority. That's why to give preference to anybody -- either Evlogy[, Archbishop of the MP, or Archbishop Valentin] -- I have no right to do and will never do it." Then Mager is clearly upset: "It is interesting to ask what rule made the mayor call Rousancov 'Archbishop' and Vladyka Evlogy - just 'Evlogy'?"

One must think that it was nothing but personal respect for Archbishop Valentin!

Then Mager relates how Archimandrite Valentin left the MP and that "after the schism, for a long time there was no parish of the Russian Orthodox Church -- priests simply refused the appointment. How can there be a parish on Valentin's territory? The majority of the people are his -- he is master here, with a good relationship with the government. but later Vladyka [Evlogy] found a monk who started services, then, later opened a Protection Convent."

Then the author of the article tries to present Archbishop Valentin to readers as a leader of some totalitarian cult. He describes that in Suzdal "people are rather disunited, weak, and here -- Valentin with his grip. His hold is so powerful that to leave the sect is almost impossible. Just recently, someone ordained by Valentin managed to leave and he related the following practices: you are not left alone, even for a moment, to sleep -- only two, to communicate -- only in groups, and in the church there conversations only about the KGB and "the red church", also in the altar."

All of this is a blatant lie, invented either by the author or his "informant." It is rather widely known that Archbishop Valentin never receives back any clergy who have left him, including even bishops (for example Bishop Arseny) when they ask to be readmitted. Also, every monk and novice has his own cell in the new Synod' building.

Mager complains also about Archbishop Valentin "being domineering over his flock. In his Sunday school there are hundreds of children. Indeed, one has to admit that the children are fanatically devoted to him. It is true he has almost hypnotic gifts and, one may say a black charisma. This is demonstrated by a luxurious video made in America for his 60th birthday." This is another lie. The film is of various church processions, the consecration of restored churches and some services, partly presided over by Archbishop Valentin. Unfortunately, the film could be more professional and was made in Russia and not in USA!

The author briefly touches on the relations of Archbishop Valentin with the MP and says that "regarding relations with the Russian Orthodox Church his tactic is that of coexistence."

At the end of his slanderous article, Mager relates that in Suzdal there are 12,000 inhabitants and out of them, no more than 300 are real believers, but in one sentence he states that "most of the people are his", and in another, "half belongs to the Valentine sect." To those who visit Suzdal it is obvious that the first statement is closer to the truth.

The author "feels quite uncomfortable on the streets of Suzdal knowing that of all the people he meets, half are schismatics and every fourth beautiful church belongs to schismatics."

It is true that there are beautiful churches, but almost all of them were restored by Archbishop Valentin and majority of the remainder in Suzdal have been waiting for many years for restoration by the Moscow Patriarchate.

We have quoted rather extensively from this malicious article by a patriarchal zealot, but he, despite his malice was forced to recognize the importance of Archbishop Valentin in Suzdal. Being jealous of his moral authority, his "black charisma," his charitable and building activities, Mager in no way tries to explain the reason for any kind of status for Patriarchal Archbishop Evlogy. Maybe this is a result of (as according to Mager himself) these humble and not too cultured citizens of Suzdal suddenly considered the history of, let us say, the Holy Virgin of Kazan Church which happened to be the first one restored by at that time Archimandrite Valentin. He served in it for a number of years, but then the church was taken away from him by the diocesan authorities and he was given another church, which badly needed restoration. But the MP immediately rented out the Kazan church to an art studio, perfectly well aware that half-nude models would be in the location of the holy altar table. Also, maybe the Orthodox Suzdalites finally came to the conclusion that nuns are not supposed to convert a convent church into a very popular restaurant in the region which has the seemingly innocent name of "Trapeznaya" and in which an orchestra plays as was done with one of the churches in Protection Convent of the MP!

Is not this the reason why, despite all the intrigues and efforts by the Moscow Patriarchate, behind the "sectarian and schismatic" Archbishop Valentin there devotedly stands at least the half of all the faithful in Suzdal, and the other half of unbelievers deeply respects him? It is not in vain that the proverb says: "You will reap what you sew."

ABOUT THE PARISH OF RIGHTEOUS NEW MARTYR ST. ELISABETH IN ST. PETERSBURG

In our last issue of "Church News" # 6 (82) we reported that the parish of Righteous New Martyr St. Elisabeth in St. Petersburg left the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and joined the Russian Orthodox Church headed by Archbishop Valentin.

A short while ago we received the petition of this parish addressed to Archbishop Valentin with the following contents: We, the members of community of Righteous Martyr St. Elisabeth in St. Petersburg petition you to accept our community under your hierarchical omophorion.

Our community left the Moscow Patriarchate in June, 1997, and entered into canonical submission of the ROCOR. By entering the ROCOR we were seeking a true Church, which firmly stands in the Orthodox faith and cares about the speedy rebirth of the Church life in Russia.

By leaving the MP, we exited not from a specific church organization, but from all "world Orthodoxy," since all the former Local Churches now quite openly have fallen into the heresy of Ecumenism, trampling the Orthodox canons and dogmas and, therefore to remain in communion with official Churches is not compatible with the salvation of the soul. We hoped that the ROCOR will keep to her course of breaking with heretical "world Orthodoxy" a course which was to follow the anathema against the heresy of Ecumenism proclaimed in the year 1983. Yet, unfortunately, we did not find that in the ROCOR. We became convinced by experience that the leadership of the ROCOR, in practice, is very little interested in rebirth of true Orthodox Church in Russia. We see it even in the fact that the Russian hierarchs are not even members of the [ROCOR] Synod and therefore in no way can exercise any influence over the general course of the ROCOR, with which a hierarch while living abroad rules over three major Russian dioceses and the [other] hierarchs who remain abroad do not listen to the voices of their Russian believers; and those who are more "active" are simply cast out, as happened a few years ago with the hierarchs of your Church.

During two years of being in the ROCOR, exploring its activities and her hierarchs, the views of clergy and believers, we came to conclusion that of late the ROCOR, instead of breaking with pseudo-Orthodoxy, is swiftly moving toward the path of rapprochement and total blending with it, which is clearly demonstrated by constant concelebrations of hierarchs and clergy abroad with members of the Ecumenist Serbian Church and other false Orthodox Churches, as well as from the latest declaration of the Synod of Bishops from April of this year in which there is a request for holy prayers addressed to the bishops and clergy of the Serbian Patriarchate. Those and many other declarations and acts of the hierarchs and some clergy of the ROCOR demonstrate that there is no question of separation from "world Orthodoxy"; therefore for us under those conditions, to remain within the ROCOR becomes equal to staying within the MP or other Ecumenist church formations.

To proceed from this, we accepted a resolution about leaving the ROCOR and entrance into the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, since we know that you always care about the preservation of Orthodoxy, do not commune with any false churches and are working for the rebirth and strengthening of the true Church in Russia.

Your Eminence's humble servants, the members of community of Righteous Martyr St. Elisabeth
Resolved at the meeting of the community on September 1/14, 1999.

ABOUT THE LATVIAN AUTONOMOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH

As we reported on several occasions in various issues of "Church News," even after more than five long years the Latvian Autonomous Orthodox Church has not been allowed to register its communities, which deprives her of the right to put up on its own buildings a sign with the indication that it is a church. Also, it is not allowed to make any external changes in the buildings and may not decorate them with a cross.

Bishop Victor of Daugavpils managed to get in touch with the Keston Institute, an English organization that devoted its activities to assisting persecuted Christians mainly in countries which were under the Communists.

The Keston News Service in its July edition published several pages on a complete history of the Latvian Autonomous Orthodox Church which quite clearly explains that the only reason the civil authorities refuse the Church's registration is a connection with the Moscow Patriarchate, which according to local laws is guaranteed a total monopoly on Orthodoxy in this country.

The civil authorities counter all efforts to get registered with various tricks. For example, the Justice Department on June 9, 1998, informed Mr. Valums that according to the law the Church is permitted to own property and have a bank account, yet the very same Justice Department on August 27, 1999, after consulting the Moscow Patriarchate about the possibility of registration, states "that if the reconstruction of a building, belonging to an unregistered religious organization might create an disturbance among the Orthodox who belong to the Latvian Orthodox Church of the MP, and might become a threat to public order, then the reconstruction of a building for the above purpose should not be supported."

A COMPULSORY REORGANIZATION WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION OF "THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA"

For quite some time rumors were circulating about dubious financial records of this Church which in the 70's received from the Moscow Patriarchate the status of the Autocephalous Church. This status is still not recognized by the eastern patriarchs with the exception of the Moscow Patriarchate and those patriarchates which at that time were under the authority of Communist governments.

The official declaration of October 1, 1999 by the chancellery of that Church, according to the newspaper of the "OCA", "The Orthodox Church" for October-November 1999, sounds quite decent: Metropolitan Theodosius during the meeting of his Synod declared that there is a need to reorganize the chancellery. The main reason for it, supposedly, is a necessity to review the functions of the treasurer and the technique of his financial operations. As a result of those reforms Archbishop Herman is appointed as Acting Treasurer, and gratitude is expressed to the Protodeacon Erick Willer for his 11 years of service in the central administration.

Yet, behind those unexpected measures, there appear to be very serious violations of the civil laws.

From letters and reports to the Metropolitan Council, and also to members of the Auditing Commission signed by its President John Kozey, III, it becomes clear that the latter discovered a number of very serious violations, which even threaten the "Orthodox Church of America" with loss of the status of an charitable organization with tax exempt status.

From a number of documents we happened to receive from the Orthodox Christian News Service, as well as from explanations given by Bishop Tikhon of San Francisco and other various sources it becomes clear that the financial records were kept so unprofessionally that it aroused the suspicion not only of the authorities of New York State, but also the federal authorities. There is very little documentation of the usage of an American Express credit card when \$80,000 was charged for organizing a birthday party for Metropolitan Theodosius or \$10,000 for a hotel stay in New York City, which "unnecessarily expose the leadership of the Church to the appearance of impropriety;" a gift of Archer Daniels Midland Foundation in the amount of \$250,000 became known only because this corporation published its records submitted to the IRS. The Auditing Commission also made one more "discovery:" the Andreas Foundation in 1997 made a gift to the "Orthodox Church in America" of \$500,000 which was deposited in a "discreet" account. The generous donor happened to be certain Michael Andreas, the dishonest company president who for his swindles was in October of the current year put in jail for two years. He is also a vice president of the foundation which previously made a donation of \$250,000 to the OCA. This also became known from the reports to the IRS. And altogether, the Auditing Committee of the "Orthodox Church in America" found that there is very faulty documentation which exceeds a sum of more than two million dollars. And the Committee feels that the issue is not so much of preserving a secret status of the foundation, which is at the Metropolitan's disposal, as much a creation of another parallel secret budget of that Church.

Archbishop Herman reported to the Metropolitan Council that the lawyers recommended hiring a private firm in order to review the entire accounting situation.

It is no wonder that the former "Metropolia" had to reorganize so suddenly!

THE POPE AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCH

In connection with the celebrations in Bethlehem, the Russian language "Novoye Russkoe Slovo" ("New Russian Word") of December 15, 1999, published information that on December 12, 1999, the Vatican State Secretary, Cardinal Angelo Sodano arrived in Moscow on an unofficial visit.

The official reason for this visit was the consecration of a Catholic Cathedral in Moscow, but as the journalist writes, "the main reason for arrival of the Vatican's Secretary of State is the meeting with Alexis II and an effort to communicate with the Russian Orthodox Church."

This Catholic appeared in Russia with 30 Bishops, 4 cardinals and more than 100 Catholic priests from 13 countries.

Moscow never had a Catholic cathedral before. There was one only in St. Petersburg. The present one was started in 1903, but in 1911 the construction was stopped for lack of funds. During the Communist rule, the unfinished church was confiscated and only in 1997 given to the Catholics. It is believed that there are some 65,000 Roman Catholics in Moscow.

Yet, the main goal of Cardinal Sodano was a meeting with Ridiger/"Drozdov." According to the newspaper, Ridiger received Sodano in his residence in Chisty Pereulok. At the meeting "the problems of meeting the 3rd millennium and Christmas, as well as possibility of a meeting of the Pope with the Patriarch of Russia in Palestine" were discussed.

Generally speaking, Ridiger is willing to meet with the head of the Catholics, but only if he will apologize for his proselytizing in Ukraine. So far, the Vatican is unwilling to apologize, but many matters might change. The cardinal already met with the Secretary of State Ivanov and a meeting with the Prime-Minister Putin is under way.

If a Papal visit to Bethlehem takes place, it would be interesting to find out the details of his "brotherly" meeting with all the representatives of "Ecumenical Orthodoxy"!

WORDS AND ACTIONS OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

"Church News" received by fax extracts from the newspaper "Rus Pravoslavnaya" ("Orthodox Russia") published in Russian in November.

This material is divided into several sections. In the first section, entitled "The Tsar's Case," it is reported that the Local Council that, according to a Patriarchal announcement, was to canonize the Royal Family will not take place. Metropolitan Sergius (Fomin) of Solnechnogorsk gave a ridiculous explanation for this decision. In a interview given to the newspaper "Rus Derzhavnaya" he declared: "We cannot have a Local Council because there will be a lot of delegates and we do not have a space where we could gather together!" The editors of "Rus Pravoslavnaya" with a great irony pity an episcopate which is so poor that it cannot rent a room.

The next section is devoted to the scandal of Bishop Nikon of Ekaterinburg. It is entitled, "Let's Strike a Blow at the Committee for Perversion and Unrestraint."

As a result of countless complaints about the perversion of Bishop Nikon, Patriarchate twice sent a investigating Committee in order to settle this shameful case which received a wide publicity not only in Russia, but also abroad. Finally, after the "investigation," Bishop Nikon was removed from his see "at his own request" and the clergy and lay people who complained about him were severely punished. In addition, from a different source received by "Church News" (extracts from resolutions of the Moscow Patriarchate, published by "N-G Religion" # 14 (37) of July, 1999, the text of the amazing departing speech of this bishop who disgraced himself before the whole world was published. In it he apologized for "the recent confusions and temptations into which (he) brought willingly and unwillingly." So far, so good it seems, but then follows a very interesting form of apology. "With bitterness I have to state, that I am not the first bishop who under pressure leaves this cathedra, unfortunately from some part of the clergy, which is led by external and non-church powers." In connection with that, Bishop Nikon pleaded with his former flock: "Do not let Vladyka Vikenty be torn to pieces by the wolves in the sheep's clothing who attack Christ's Church! If you let Vladyka Vikenty be profaned, with a shudder I do not even dare to imagine what is waiting for you at the Lord's Dread Judgement, which inevitably will come."

Then in "Rus Pravoslavnaya" there is another section, called "Sodomites Versus the Money-grabbers." From this we find out that the zealot in exposing the pervert Nikon was mainly Abbot Abraham (Roisman), a Jew by nationality, and renown in the Church for his sympathies for renovationists and hatred for some Russian Saints. Thus without hesitation he called the Righteous Joseph of Volotsk and Gennady of Novgorod fanatics and obscurantists. Pretty soon it became known that the struggle between Abbot Abraham and Nikon was not case of zeal for Church truth, but for material interest in an illegal sale of precious stones which could not be resolved between the bishop and the abbot.

Another section is "The Department of Foreign Relations of the Church under Attack." Here we learn that the head of the Department of the Foreign Relation of the Church, Metropolitan Kyrill, had a lot of difficulties with hushing up the case of the pervert Nikon, and even a much worse one connected with the name of his protege and closest collaborator, Bishop Gury (Shalimov) of Korsun.

The Gury's diocese includes numerous parishes in Western Europe and they are sort of representatives of the Patriarchate in Europe. Gury became as infamous as Nikon for his perversions and thefts of church money and of such a extent that Kyrill had to remove him on grounds of "health." Probably Gury will soon recover while presiding over another diocese.

The last section is called "The Drudgery of the Synod" and to it are devoted more than one and a half pages. Here we clearly see the convictions that tie Moscow Patriarchate to the heresy of Ecumenism. In this part there is a quote from Ridiger's speech to the monks of Valaam Monastery, which some time ago made a very firm statement against Ecumenism. In this speech Ridiger said, "Sometimes in the monasteries there appears an anti-ecumenical mood, which is forced or provoked by those who want to bring division into the life of the Church. We live in this world, therefore as in the past, we will strengthen and develop our relationships with the Churches who do not proselytize on our Russian soil. (Emphasized and underlined by the "CH. N.")

The author of this interesting summary also cites the Synod's resolutions of only one meeting, held on June 4th. The following are resolutions of that meeting:

"To approve the work of the Committee 'Islam-Orthodoxy' chaired by Metropolitan Kyrill and to decree that the dialogue between the adherents of Islam and Orthodoxy is 'important' and should be continued;

"To approve the 'Consultation of the Orthodox Churches and the European Union;

"To announce as useful the negotiations of Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad with representatives of the National Council of Churches in Norway;

"To express a satisfaction with the results of a visit to Moscow by the head of Episcopal Church in the USA Frank Griswold;

"To schedule measures for 'the development of mutual relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church of Finland."

This section also has an extract from Ridiger's speech on the 70th jubilee of one of the most abominable of all the Moscow Patriarchate's hierarchs who, according to various sources, was secretly a Catholic who died in the arms of the Pope, Nikodim (Rotov). In praising him, Ridiger cannot find enough words.

The Orthodox reviewer sums up his information and makes a number of sad comments on the state of the Russian Church. He points out that despite the fall of Communism, the Moscow Patriarchate lacks a spirit of "sobornost" and that despite the numerous promises of "leadership" of the Russian Church to canonize the Royal Martyrs nothing has happened and the heresy of Ecumenism is not only flourishes but spreads, and since there is no ecclesiastical court in the Church the moral level of the episcopate "has fallen lower than ever before."

ICON OF THE HOLY VIRGIN OF VLADIMIR AGAIN IS NOT IN CHURCH

The newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" # 34-35 reported that during the month of September, at the Feast of the Meeting the Icon of the Vladimir Theotokos in the church of St. Nicholas in Tolmachi, the Russian people had a chance to pray before one of the great sacred objects of the Russian people. The transfer of this icon into a church-museum for safe-keeping (doesn't this sound strange?) was made very solemnly by Metropolitan Sergy of Solnechnograd, and a bit later, Ridiger himself served a moleben before this icon. Orthodox people rushed to that church to venerate their great sacred object, but it appears that "the icon was not to be found either in the church-museum, nor in a permanent exhibition in the Tretyakov Gallery. Right after the Patriarch left, according to a decision of a scientific committee of the gallery, the icon, called the Protectress of the Russian people and a Russian sacred object, was brought to the museum's depository room that supposedly guarantees the safety of the icon!"

It would be interesting to learn, did Ridiger know when he served the moleben that the icon immediately will be taken away by the order of some godless "scientific committee"? Considering his intimate relations with all the former and present "power keepers," most probably he knew, but kept a cowardly silence.

Just recently a Serbian newspaper "Pravoslavie" wrote about this disappearance of the Vladimir icon and pointed out that Ridiger considered it to be one of his greatest achievements that he managed to get the icon back after it was stolen by the atheists in order to be exhibited in the Tretyakov Gallery to make money. But it seems that even a guarantee given by him that the icon will be enshrined in a specially made case did not help. The most sacred object of the Russian people which was preserved for whole millennium in a church, is now taken away and no one knows its whereabouts.

HOW LUZHKOV WAS "BAPTIZED"

"Nezavisimaya Gazeta" ("Independent Newspaper") of November 4, 1999 published an article by Zoya Krakhmalnikov in which she quoted the interview given by Mayor Luzhkov to "Obshchaya Gazeta" ("General Newspaper") relating how he was baptized. It turns out Luzhkov was baptized by Alexis Ridiger himself in his "patriarchal baptistery" and, as Krakhmalnikov relates a bit further, "he immediately stated that he is an unbeliever."

Quite reasonably Krakhmalnikov asks how could such a "baptism" happen, when during the sacrament the one who is baptized is asked three times in succession: "Do you believe in Christ as God and do you worship Him?" And she continues: "These three questions are answered three times and then one makes three prostrations. Well, what did in this case Youry Michailovich? Lied? Or did Alexis not perform the sacrament according to the prescribed rite?"

The most probable answer to the question posed by the author of the article is that both participants in this blasphemy alike considered it to be an amusing comedy.

"LIBERAL" CHRISTIANITY HEADED FOR THE GRAVEYARD

Such was the title of an article published by the newspaper "The Christian News" of December 13, 1999, a whole page in length and giving the sad results of the so-called "liberals" who lead the Catholics and other denominations.

The survey was made by a newspaper, "The National Catholic Reporter", at the end of October. Based on this information the Protestant newspaper presents the very sad data of the decline not only of Roman Catholicism, but also various denominations around the world. Data were gathered from between 1987 and 1999. The opinion poll based on information received from 37,000 parishes of various faiths: from Catholics to Pentecostals.

Already by 1987 77% of Catholics believed that a participation in the mass was not obligatory for a devout person; 72% felt there is no need to follow Catholic doctrine regarding abortions and birth control; 65% did not obey laws about forbidden divorces; 38% did not believe in the transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts and 23% no longer believed in the physical resurrection of Christ. Such is the situation of Catholics in America.

The situation is not a bit better in England. According to "The London Telegraph" of November 28, 1999, "churchgoing is declining at such a rate that most churches will be virtually empty within 20 years." According to the British survey, the church attendance on Sundays (including Catholics) in that country is estimated at 8% of the total population. Further it says: "Unless there is a rapid and unexpected turnaround, that number will drop to 2% in 20 years."

In 1989 Sunday services were attended by 4,742,800 people, but already by 1998 3,714,700 persons, in other words, during this period church attendance fell to 22%. Only among the Orthodox and Baptists was there a 105% increase of church attendance.

The Anglican Church in Canada and the Episcopal in America are considered to be the most liberal among all the Christian denominations. The Anglicans in Canada lost 267 thousand members during the last 30 years. In the Canadian Anglican Church during 1967 there were performed 31,215 baptisms, but in 1995 the number fell to 17,493, this means there were 43% less baptisms. For the same period and in the same percentage there were fewer weddings in Canada. Between 1966 and 1995 there was a 73% fall of attendance by children of Sunday schools.

The newspaper explains these terrible statistics reflecting a loss of the religious feelings with nothing less than "the mother's milk for liberal Christians" and gives a characteristic example. In the town of Hendersonville, NC, a lesbian and prominent "theologian" Isabel Carter Heyward was invited by the Episcopal clergy to speak at a retreat and blasphemously denied the Divinity of the Saviour and preached that the Christian dogma of Holy Trinity is an example for homoerotic relations. Some listeners protested, but the speaker for Episcopal diocese, Rev. E. Maloney defended her and stated that her speech was "very valuable" and that she made important contribution to all Christians. "There is something in value in listening to people that you violently disagree with. It allows you to explore your own beliefs," said a "Christian priest," totally ignoring the horrible blasphemies of this perverted woman.

DEACONESSES IN THE ALBANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH?

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of October 27 reported that Anastasios, Archbishop of Tirana and all Albania supposedly ordained three women deacons. The entire population of Albania consists of a bit more than 3 million inhabitants, mainly Muslims and only some 5% are Orthodox.

The Albanian Church used to be a part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, but severed relations in 1937. Only in 1992 did the Greeks agree to give the status of autonomy to Orthodox Albanians. Archbishop Anastasios is of Greek nationality.

The information that he had ordained three women to be deacons was for the first time reported in the Swiss Protestant press, "Reformirter Pressedienst." When asked by telephone by the ENI, Archbishop Anastasios categorically denied this information and said that indeed he gave an interview to a Swiss agency during the meeting of the WCC and that he was "completely misunderstood." The archbishop specified that "This report is pure fiction - none of it is accurate beyond the basic background. We use women in all our activities." Yet he revealed his hand a bit when he said that "Sometimes important initiatives can be destroyed by incorrect information. If misinformation has been circulated that the Orthodox Church of Albania has ordained women as deacons, any discussion of this issue will be stifled. However, I hope to convince others that the move [of ordaining women as deacons] is desirable, we are at the beginning here and can't decide by ourselves. We are open to the needs of this society. But we don't wish to suggest we are taking quick decisions without consulting others." Then he added that he hoped to raise the question of ordinations "at the right time after proper preparations."

One has to keep in mind that the matter of "deaconesses" raised by the contemporary feminists has very little to do with the ancient deaconesses. The contemporary feminist movement has in mind not the former duty of preparing women for baptism and participating in it by anointing them with the oil (the Greek church anoints the whole body of a baptized person, as a symbol of a warrior who enters the struggle with Satan) and took care of order in the section of church designated for women. No, at present the question is about granting total liturgical rights to women who (with the blessings of modernist bishops) plan to be regular deacons.

Archbishop Anastasios asserts this indirectly when he categorically renounces a possibility for women to be ordained priests.

In the East the deaconesses fell into total disuse in the 12th century. They were mainly replaced by nuns. In the Russian Church there never were any deaconesses.

The New Martyr Grand Duchess Elisabeth, who established a convent-like community, asked the Holy Synod to restore the order of deaconesses, but she was refused on grounds that after such a long period of nonexistence of them in Church life this would be a break of Church Tradition.

ECUMENICAL AWARD TO SUPPORTERS OF HOMOSEXUALS

The "Ecumenical Press International" on December 8 reported that the gay and lesbian association in the USA established a monetary award to those religious leaders who will publicly support the rights of homosexuals.

This award will be named The Dr. Paul H. Sherry Leadership and Courage Award in honor of a just recently retired clergyman of United Church of Christ. He also happened to be the first "honoree" of this award. It will be given annually at a meeting of the National Council of Churches in the name of various inter-religious perverts, including those who by numerous operations changed their sex. To this organization, with a name 4 lines long, belong more than a dozen American "churches."

Sherry received his award in Cleveland in November, 1999, at the meeting of the National Council of Churches on account of 50th anniversary of Ecumenism. In his speech he said: "I know the exclusion and pain you have felt. But I truly believe that through your efforts God's purpose will be fulfilled."

It seems, that Dr. Sherry who headed the "United Church of Christ" never held a Bible in his hands!

In our times the world wide spread of various types of perversion and especially homosexuality and lesbianism has reached unheard of dimensions and regularized cohabitations and abortions became an every day fact in a multitude of "Christian" countries.

A NEW STYLE OF MONASTICISM IN RUSSIA

The official publication of the Serbian Church "Pravoslavlje" (Orthodoxy) in the beginning of November reported that on the initiative of Alexis II Ridiger in accord with his agreement with the Defense Ministry there were founded the monastic barracks. According to this plan tonsured monks and novices have to carry out the usual military duties, but they are to be close to their monasteries. Soldier-monks start their day with the prayer (something, that is expected not only from the monks, but all Orthodox Christians), getting up a bit earlier than other soldiers. In the same way the evening rule is observed and in the dormitories there are icons (again, this is also expected from all Orthodox Christians). Once a week they are to be visited by a priest to hear their confessions, and monasteries are obliged to send them vegetables, fish and monk-made bread. According to the newspaper, "the monks are very happy that they serve in the military and still can adhere to the monastic rules." It is not related what sort of "uniform" these monks wear. Maybe scufias instead of military hats? There are already three such monastic barracks: in the Vladimir region, in the Urals and in Valaam. It is not accidental that some fathers predicted that at the last times monks will be living like lay people and lay people would resemble demons. It is characteristic that the start for a new brand of "monasticism" in Russia is made by the false Patriarch Ridiger. It seems that something like this had not occurred to even the renovatoinists and members of the Living Church!

DWINDLING OF CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

According to the Serbian Orthodox Newspaper in the USA "The Path of Orthodoxy" for November-December the number of Christians living in the Holy Land is drastically dwindling. The Christian exodus from the Holy Land started in 1948 after British authorities left Palestine. At that time there were 31,000 in Jerusalem alone. By 1967 under pressure from the Jordanians, 12,000 remained and at the present time, when the Jewish and Muslim populations have exploded, there are now less than 10,000 Christian and the majority of them consist of the clergy and staff of the ecclesiastical establishments. The Christian residents of the Holy Land hope that the millennium festivities will in some manner attract the attention of world Christianity not so much to their own problems, but mainly to the international status of Jerusalem.

ONE MORE BLASPHEMOUS OUTRAGE

The newspapers "The Christian News" of December 20 and "Daily News" of December 18 reported that "The National Catholic Reporter" announced a contest for a contemporary picture of Christ the Saviour as "Jesus of the people." In this contest 1,700 "artists" participated from 19 countries. The award is to be \$2,000.

The contest was won by Janet McKenzie, an American woman from Vermont and who calls herself a "devout agnostic." She said that this was her very first picture of Christ and that it took her 3 weeks to complete it.

Both newspapers published this outrageous image, given the name of Christ. On it is depicted a beardless young man with a typical African hair, which was painted by this blasphemous woman from a black woman. Around the head there is painted a halo. The garments have no particular form, but as a background of this horrible picture there is painted sort of a cross, decorated with a feather. It is supposed to depict "the spirituality of American Indians," also an Indian big circle on the cross, which represents a perfect harmony in life and nature.

A judge at this blasphemous contest was an English Catholic nun, Wendy Becket. She decided that the image of "Christ" was "a pleasant Jesus" and that He was "looking out at us with ineffable dignity."

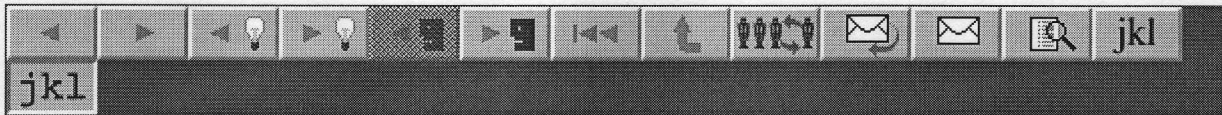
The "nun" also declared that a long time ago in Western culture Christ was depicted as a white man, but now, when the world is turning toward the third world African countries, there must be a different understanding of the Savior's personality and origin so that it would impress modern humanity.

Among the various images of "Christ" there were pictures of Him as a farmer, a convict before execution, dancing on Jerusalem streets with Arabs and... even a clown! It is amazing that this outrageous contest was arranged by the Roman Catholics and the judge was a Catholic nun!

NEW THEOLOGICAL BOOKS IN FRENCH

"Church News" does not have a section for book reviews and almost never publishes any advertisements. Yet at present we feel it is necessary to inform our readers that almost simultaneously, for the first time in French, three books were published: "Orthodox Dogmatics" by Fr. Michael Pomazansky, a booklet of sermons by St. John of Kronstadt and "The Dogma of Redemption" by Metropolitan Anthony Khrapovitsky. The translator of these works is a gentleman, both French and Russian by birth, who is at present a seminary student in Jordanville. The price of Fr. Pomazansky's Dogmatics (467 pages) is \$40; the sermons (63 pages), \$15 and "The Dogma of Redemption" (55 pages) is \$15.

Orders are to be sent to this address: La Pierre Angulaire/Cornerstone
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Date: Mon, 10 Jan 2000 10:38:00 -0800
Reply-To: Orthodox Christianity <ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU>
Sender: Orthodox Christianity <ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU>
From: "Fr. Alexander Lebedeff" <lebedeff@WESTWORLD.COM>
Subject: Re: Baptism for converts
In-Reply-To: <200001101208.EAA22475@mail.wgn.net>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset="us-ascii"

Things are not always so simple, so black and white.

For example, one should remember in this discussion of Reception of converts that the opinions of the leading hierarchs of Russia in the last century, as well as those of its best theologians, were overwhelmingly supportive of the position that the Roman Catholic Church possessed valid mysteries.

The theologian Konstantin Leontiev wrote:

"There is a great difference between the views of the Eastern hierarchs about Rome and Catholicism. The Greek Patriarchs believe it to be simply a heresy (although there has been no Council). But among us, many, like Philaret [Metr. of Moscow], are not ready to consider them to be as such [heretics], since only among the Catholics among all of those who have split themselves off from Greek Orthodoxy, neither the grace of Apostolic Succession, nor the Traditions of the Holy Fathers, nor the teaching on the Seven Mysteries have been broken." ("Selected Letters," St. Petersburg, 1993, p. 541).

Let us see what the great Hierarch Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow (mentioned above) himself wrote on this issue.

In his "Discussions between One Who is a Seeker and One Who is Convinced about the Orthodoxy of the Eastern Greco-Russian Church" includes this dialogue:

"Seeker: So must I consider as true, for example, the Roman Church, as well?"

"Answer: You unwaveringly wish to force me to judge. Know then, that holding to the words of the Scripture, no church which believes "that Jesus is the Christ," will I dare to call false. The Christian Church can only be either "purely true," confessing the true and salvific Divine teaching without the commingling of false and harmful human opinions; or it can be "not purely true," comixing to the true and salvific teaching of Christ false and harmful human opinions. . . As far as the Church of the East is concerned, I have already proven that its Creed contains pure teaching. But as I do not know how many Christians in the West and how deeply they are imbued with individual opinions which are found in the Churches of the West, and which of them firmly holds to the faith, the cornerstone of the Universal Church of Christ, -- the due respect that I have expressed as to the opinion of the Eastern Church in no way comprises a judgment and condemnation of Western Christians and the Western Church. According to the

laws of the Church themselves, I offer up all of the Western Church to the judgment of the Universal Church, and the souls of Christians to the judgment or especially the kindheartedness of God." (Works of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, Moscow 1994, pp. 408-409).

An finally, look at what (St.) Theophan the Recluse had to say when asked directly whether grace existed in the Roman Catholic Church:

"It seems that our Church is condescending to Catholics and recognizes the potency not only of Catholic baptism and the other mysteries, but also of ordination, which is very significant. Therefore, it is better for us to refrain both from the asking of such questions, as well as resolving them. We must hold to only one thing, that one should not go over to the Catholics, because among them some parts in the structure of their confession and church order are defective or changed by departure from the more ancient ones. More than this I do not know what to say." (Collected Letters, Vol. 7, Moscow, 1994, p. 202).

With love in Christ,

Prot. Alexander Lebedeff

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