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On the Nativity of Christ
and the New Year

Church News sincerely greets its readers and wishes them all the best in the coming year!

With the start of our 14th year of publication, as is our custom, we turn to our readers with a request for financial support for "Church News." Due to recent events in our Church we have increased significantly the number of recipients of our publication beyond those who have actually subscribed in an effort to get the word out. This means additional costs even as postal rates have increased.

Nevertheless, we ask those who do NOT wish to receive our publication to let us know to save us expenses and so they can be free of unwanted mail.

As before, we are willing to send "Church News" to those who do not have the means to subscribe, but we request that you let us know that this is the case.

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A request of our Canadian readers: US banks unfortunately refuse to honor Canadian dollars and raise obstacles. We respectfully ask you to keep this in mind.

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MUSICAL GROUP OF GREEK MONKS

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**CHRISTMAS EPISTLE
OF METROPOLITAN VITALY,
FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA**

Christ is born, Glorify Him!

Each of the Great Orthodox Festivals contains within itself both its historical origins, and also, most importantly, the annual repetition of its Divine Grace together with all its inherent power.

The Almighty Lord Himself is born among us in miraculous fashion from the Ever Virgin Mary with the human name of Jesus, and following the ancient custom another name is added expressing the hope of parents as to what their child will become in life. In this case He was called Christ, meaning "He, Who is anointed by God", sent by God for our eternal salvation. Many people then decided that He would be their Savior from diseases, from disasters and grief. Not one person could have thought, other than the Mother of God herself, that Her Son would be the Savior from sin, from eternal death of hell.

So now there is no other name upon earth besides that of Jesus Christ which man can call upon and be saved from eternal death. Each of us must try in his life to follow in the steps of our great Teacher, the God Man Jesus Christ, as far as his strength permits, and always only while seeking the help of His Divine Grace.

Nativity of Christ, 2001
Metropolitan Vitaly

**NATIVITY EPISTLE
ARCHBISHOP VALENTINE OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR
TO THE GOD-PRESERVED FLOCK OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Beloved in the Lord archpastors and pastors, all-honored monastics, God-beloved brothers and sisters,
co-workers in prayer and struggle on the field of Christ
CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!**

Led by the Bethlehem star, in our thoughts we pass through a journey of two thousand years to the shepherd's crib where the God-Child Christ was born and lay, He Who voluntarily came down to earth so as to make believers rich in Him. The Son of God took on the form of a weak child so as to make those strong who follow after Him, and raise them to heaven to God the Father, to be one with Him.

Christ is born, God is incarnate, the heavens rejoice, the earth makes glad, the magi with the shepherds bow down in worship, and over the whole world the loud and joyful greeting rings out: "Christ is born, glorify Him!" and then the Angelic chant: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men!" which until now echoes with its gracious echoes in the hearts of Orthodox Christians at the Christmas greeting in all languages of the earth.

The birth of the God-Child Christ exceeds all human comprehension. After all, He was born Who for our sake and for our salvation not only deigned to be incarnate, but, being sinless, accepted baptism like an ordinary man. He lived among men, was obedient to God the Father to the very death on the Cross and on the third day arose, having trampled down the death, ascended into heaven, and sat at the right hand of the Father. And according to the witness of Gospel, He will shortly come to earth to judge the living and the dead, to give to each according to his works.

Beloved in the Lord Fathers, Brothers, Sisters and all-honored Monastics!

Have we not come right to that time when, according to the account of the holy Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, in accordance with the prophecy of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the eve of His Second Coming great upheavals will take place? "Also you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not afraid: for this must all come to pass, but the end is not yet. For people will rise up against people, and kingdom against kingdom; and there will be famines, and plagues, and earthquakes in various places. All this is the beginning of sorrows. Then they will give you up to tortures and will kill you; and you will be hated by all peoples for My name's sake" (Matt. 24: 6-9).

We are already living witnesses that this is now taking place, that it is the beginning of sorrows. And therefore I earnestly beseech you, in the last days of our earthly existence, to be filled with alarm and cease to transgress the Evangelical commandments and despise the God-pleasing life. It is necessary to return to the Orthodox teaching – to the faith of our fathers, without the sins of Sergianism, the heresy of Ecumenism, betrayal and other destructive sins.

On the day of the Great Feast of Nativity of Christ our hearts are filled with joy and gladness, with love and truth – for the God-Child Christ is born. St. Ephraim the Syrian wrote in his works that Truth and Love are two wings, which cannot be divided, for Truth cannot be without Love. Love cannot soar aloft without Truth: they are bound by the bonds of friendship.

If good will, Truth and Love reign among men, if the heart of man is directed to care for his neighbors, if people understand that the works of love and good works are the valuable treasure which will go with us into eternal life and will witness to our intention and desire to live eternally with God, that means that we stand on the right, evangelical path.

We shall pray that the peace of God hymned by the angels does not abandon our hearts, and that the good will of God may be accomplished on us, and that the brotherly love in Christ Jesus may adorn not only our life, but also the life of those around us, both in this age and in the age to come. May our hearts not cease to glorify the God-Child Christ lying in

the manger, and may our lips constantly raise the thanksgiving prayers we are capable of to the Lord God for the sorrows and for the joys – for everything He has granted us for our salvation and for our cleansing from sin.

The 21st century, the third millennium of Christianity has begun. There is no man on earth who does not know about this. The 2000th anniversary of the Nativity of Christ is, as it were, a common festival for the earth. But what precisely are people celebrating, and how? What are they rejoicing about, what are they striving for, what are they worrying about, what thoughts attend their worries about today and tomorrow?

Let us together try and recall the evangelical account of the Nativity of the God-Child Christ. When Christ was born, the shepherds and magi came to worship Him. He was sought also by King Herod. Only the aim of the search was different. In sending the magi to find the Child who was born, the Messiah, the Savior of the human race, Herod spoke to them as follows: "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also" (Matt. 2:8). In actual fact, Herod wanted, with the aid of those who were going to worship Christ, to destroy Him.

Thus we see at the very Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ the spite of the enemy of the human race was trying on the sheep's clothing of the righteous in order, in their guise, to enter the holy sheep-pen, into the holy of holies of the earthly Church that was being born.

Later, as we know, the whole history of humanity became a history of the struggle between Christ and His Church and those to whom Truth is not dear, but dominion over people like themselves, power for the sake of power, in other words, in the final analysis, Luciferian pride.

When the Revolution prepared by the ardent enemies of Christ took place in 1917, the whole of Russian society was presented with the problem: which side would they take? Being on the side of Christ and His Church meant physical destruction for those weak in faith, and in the best case suffering for Christ. While departing from the Lord, from the Church, meant preserving oneself and prolonging one's life for a moment.

In answer to this divided feeling the sincerely believing person received the following Gospel reply: "What use is it to a man if he win the whole world but lose his own soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For he, who is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels" (Mark 8:36-38). Unfortunately, a huge majority of our fathers and grandfathers chose the second alternative – to serve, not God, but mammon.

And as a result the Anointed of God, the holy Tsar Martyr Nicholas II perished together with the uncountable hosts of holy New Martyrs of Russia. This became an ominous sign of the apostasy of hierarchs and pastors and Russians from the Church of God that was to take place shortly thereafter. This was prophesied by St. Seraphim of Sarov and Righteous John of Kronstadt...

83 years have passed since Russia immersed herself in the darkness of atheism and lack of faith, and into abyss of those unnumbered woes with which no upheavals of the pre-Revolutionary period can compare.

People have changed, the country has changed. What have Russian people in the homeland and abroad – those in the diaspora – learned in that time? What fruits of repentance for the apostasy from God of their fathers has the Russian people produced? What conclusions have been made and what steps have been undertaken by those to whom God entrusted His flock in the emigration?

With great sorrow we must confirm the fact that the Russian people has not carried out the main thing: it has continued, as before, to remain in the condition of darkened mind, when a man places material prosperity above the salvation of his soul, thinking that his everyday cares for his daily bread are his main and almost only occupation. Abusing the trust of the Russian people, the traitors of Christ have created in Russia a surrogate church, in which everything is externally similar to Orthodoxy, but within there is impurity adapted to the service of the atheist regime.

Metropolitan Sergius and his followers thought up a doctrine concerning obligatory obedience – to the point of complete submission – to every power, even if it an openly atheist power. Created on this foundation, the Moscow Patriarchate in its half century of activity has had a terrible influence on Russia.

The lie came to be not only tolerated, but an obligatory component of life, a guarantee of success, a factor in development. Sergianism, which reconciles Christ with Beliar and Socialism with the Kingdom of God, has put down such deep roots that today almost the whole world is completely convinced that the Moscow Patriarchate with its hierarch/Chekists [KGB agents] is the Russian Church.

A colossal fake has been created, a fake that for the external observer is indistinguishable from the original. However, similar substitutions of comparable significance do not pass without consequences for the whole of the rest of the world. We can definitely say that the coming century threatens to become an epoch of names. Gradually all that will remain will be the appearance, the name, but not the essence of the thing.

It is as if one takes an ordinary product from the shelf of a shop, he suddenly discovers that what is normal in it is only the name, while the content is a sheer fabrication, and rather harmful for his health. So is it in the spiritual sphere. In going towards the Church of God, to his spiritual father and instructor, the Christian frequently falls into the hands of rogues and robbers. There are now innumerable sects, some of which have woven a nest for themselves right under the roof of the Moscow Patriarchate. Innumerable are the appealing voices of the preachers who supposedly preach the truth. And forgotten are the simple words of the Gospel: "Take care that nobody deceives you; for many will come in My name, and will say it is I, and will deceive many ... At that time, if someone says to you: 'Here is Christ' or 'There He is', do not believe

him. For false christs and false prophets will arise and produce signs and wonders, so as to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect" (Mark 13: 5-6, 21-22).

It is not only Russia that has been stricken by misfortune: many of those who throughout all the years of the triumph of atheism in the homeland were witnesses to the Truth in exile, have lost acuteness of spiritual vision. Now we are witnesses of a schism unprecedented in the size in the Russian Church Abroad, when a large part of it is striving for union with the same colossal fake which calls itself "the Mother Church" – the Moscow Patriarchate.

I remember the year 1956, the Dormition Monastery in Odessa, where I was an unwilling witness as there returned from the camps and prisons, having served their terms, those hierarchs who returned to Russia after the war so as to unite with the "Mother Church" at the call of Stalin's government and the Moscow Patriarchate: "the homeland has forgiven you, the homeland calls you!" In 1946 they trustingly entered the USSR, and were all immediately caught and incarcerated for 10 years, while the "Mother Church" was silent, not raising her voice in defense of those whom she had beckoned into the trap.

In order to be "re-established" in their hierarchical rank, they had to accept and chant hymns to Sergianism, and accept the Soviet Patriarch. And what then? Some of them ended their lives under house arrest, others in monastery prisons, while others soon departed for eternity.

As proof, I shall quote documents which will perhaps cool the ardor of those rushing into the Moscow Patriarchate from the ROCA, and bring them to true reason.

On August 11, 1946, Metropolitan Seraphim, Exarch of the Patriarch of Moscow made the following appeal in his epistle: "...To our profound sorrow, we Russians, living in various countries of the world, are still divided, scattered, split up among various jurisdictions and Churches. Our Russian spiritual flock still wanders in various ecclesiastical courtyards, still searches for something, vacillates, worries, finds no rest, peace and quiet heaven in itself. Hence our Russian torments and sufferings. But it is time to stop these disputes. It is time to put an end to the searching for various spiritual leaders in accordance with one's personal and sinful tastes and moods. It is time for everyone to enter into one spiritual courtyard – the bosom of our Mother Russian Church. Why despise our Mother, who is our native, great and glorious Church, who radiates her faith, exploits and prayers throughout the world...."

"Now the great historical process of the gathering of the Russian flock, which was scattered by the will of God's judgment throughout the world, is being accomplished. And we all – bishops, pastors and lay people – must take the most lively and active part in this work. We must work and labour in the work of ecclesiastical unification, and not stand by, not be passive observers of events, and still more not resist this holy work, remembering that the Lord will call us to account for sins of division and schism at His Terrible Judgment."

Archbishop Nestor (Anisimov), on his return to the Homeland, wrote: "Our beloved homeland! We kiss your robe, our native land, and we bless you with our prayer. Our Most Holy Father and Patriarch Alexis, the great people's Pastor, Intercessor for his flock and participant with her in her sorrows and deprivations...."

Archbishop John of Molotov wrote: "...A great consolation has appeared: it has become possible in a local Russian Church to commemorate in divine services the name of our native First Hierarch, his Holiness Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and All Russia...."

Archbishop Daniel of Pinsk: "...From the first steps after my prolonged separation, it [the homeland] has gladdened me by its just attitude to the Orthodox Church, to its servers and believers, by its peaceful trust and goodwill. The unbeliever and the member of the Orthodox Church are citizens with equal rights...."

One would write much about Archbishop Juvenal of Izhevsk, Archbishop Victor of Krasnodar and many, many archpastors and pastors who returned to the Homeland in 1946 from abroad and who were condemned according to Article 58 -10 to ten years....

Is this situation not repeating itself now? Will something similar not happen to the archpastors of the Church Abroad? You know, similar words in justification of union with the Moscow Patriarchate are being spoken? Will not those who wish to unite with the Patriarchate and are thinking of strengthening their position in this world, ponder over the sad end of those who went down this road?

Moved by the love of Christ, we address the archpastors, pastors, honorable monastics and believers of the Church Abroad. Beloved fellow bishops of the Church of Christ! Stop before the yawning abyss – the Moscow Patriarchate -- before it swallows you up, as it swallowed up your predecessors in 1946. Bring forth repentance before God for your thoughtless attempt to unite with the MP. Repent before your First Hierarch, whom you intend to send into retirement. Ask forgiveness before your flock, which believed you and which you now want to destroy. Think that you are carrying out a most serious sin before God, the Holy Church and before the history. You are uniting yourselves to those, who deny any responsibility for what has been done in the past century, who are alien to repentance.

This repentance, though expected by many, has not been produced by the Moscow Patriarchate, which for more than seventy years has stubbornly persisted in the heresy of Sergianism and for forty years in the heresy of Ecumenism. It did not repent even at its fateful (as it calls it) Jubilee Council, which was consecrated to the 2000th anniversary of the Nativity of Christ, but instead took refuge in cunning verbal tricks.

In its recent Epistle the hierarchs of the Church Abroad affirm that the document on "The Foundations of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church" passed at the Bishops' Council of the MP has blotted out Sergianism. But has it? They have in mind the following passage from the "Social Doctrine":

"If the authorities force Orthodox believers to apostatize from Christ and His Church, and also to commit sinful acts to the soul, the Church must refuse to obey the State."

But will not the Lord say: "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant" (Luke 19: 22)?

If it had to refuse obedience when that was demanded, why not do so? And if it did not, why has it not now offered repentance for not carrying out its duty? Or does it "have" to only now, when it is not dangerous to talk about it, while under the Bolsheviks it did not have to? Is the Church one thing today and something else tomorrow? The Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and to the ages.

How can those who follow in the steps of the traitor Metropolitan Sergius, the friend of the revolutionaries, be counted in the hosts of the saints with the holy Tsar Martyr Nicholas II? How can there come together in the hosts of the saints both the persecuted and those who persecuted them and did not repent of it, some of whom ended their lives in peace in the Sergianist church? Can the Holy New Martyrs from the heights of heaven give their consent to being once again unceremoniously mixed with those from they decisively separated during their earthly lives?

"I am Jesus, Whom you are persecuting; it is difficult for you to kick against the goads", said the Lord Jesus Christ to the future Apostle Paul (Acts 9:5).

Is it not enough that you were present at the slaughter of the Russian Church? Is it not time for you to stop on the road to Damascus – to the Moscow Patriarchate – and recognize that you are going there with it to persecute and torment Orthodox Christians. Is it not time to recover your sight?

We address this question not only to the Church Abroad, but also to those priests and laity of the Moscow Patriarchate who, like Saul, sincerely "think they are doing service to God". We also address those who have to spark of piety in their hearts, but are wavering.

If the clergy and believers of the Moscow Patriarchate cannot themselves bring forth repentance, we pray for them, that the Lord may forgive the deceived part of the Russian Church, so that there may come in worship to the crib of the God-Child true Christians, and not those, who like Herod, are seeking to kill the Child, or to tell the secret precipitously to His enemies.

We address those who serve the Moscow Patriarchate and earnestly beseech them in these holy days finally to bring repentance instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the God-Child Christ. Bring repentance before God, before the flock that trusted you, and before your conscience, that unbribable judge, which is probably burning you day and night with its unquenchable flame. Bring repentance and ask forgiveness for having served, not God, but mammon, not the interests of the Church, but the interests of the atheists and your own enrichment, using the labors those of your sheep who have truly not spared any effort to re-establish the defiled holy places.

Ask forgiveness for the fact that you have broken unity with the triumphant heavenly Church, since you have deviated from the right teaching left by Her, and have thereby destroyed the unity of the militant Church on earth. Being called to freedom in Christ, renounce servile Sergianism and friendship with the enemies of the Church of God. Leave your business and devote all your strength to the regeneration of Orthodoxy, Russia and her glorious, but wretched and suffering people.

We call on you to fulfill the commandment of Christ and give all your wealth to the poor and needy people, and then you will have treasure in heaven.

Bring repentance to the Lord God and your flock for the fact, that having renounced the names given you in baptism or monastic tonsure, you have taken pseudonyms in fulfillment of the will of the atheists, serving them, not for edification of the Church of God, but for Her annihilation.

Do not return to Herod, but, not seeking the life of the Child, but as faithful children of His Holy Church, depart by another path to your land, so that God-Child Christ may meet you.

Beloved in the Lord fathers, brothers and sisters, children of the Russian (Rossiskoi) Orthodox Church!

From all my heart I congratulate you on the glorious and greatly triumphant Feast of the Nativity of Christ, the New Year and the Theophany. I wish that you remain faithful children of the Church of God, not deviating from the service of truth, but fulfilling the commandments of Christ for the sake of your own salvation and the salvation of those close to you. I pray that you may be confessors of the faith of Christ not only in words, but also in your personal life, as an example to others. I wish from all my loving heart that you may constantly perfect yourselves in prayer and good works, and be co-workers in the salvation of those close to you, without a feeling of superiority over them and without servility before those who are more perfect than us.

Let us raise our fervent prayers to the God-Child Christ, that, in accordance with His goodness and mercy, He may confirm us in the right faith, and strengthen the Church of God, which is militant on earth and triumphant in Heaven. Amen.

With much love, asking for your holy prayers,

Valentin, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir. The Nativity of Christ, 2000/2001, Suzdal

The "Metropolitan Seraphim (Lukianov) Exarch of the Moscow Patriarch" who is mentioned in Archbishop Valentin's Epistle was a hierarch of the ROCOR from mid-1930 and until 1945 and ruled the Western Europe Metropolitan region with its center in Paris. His appeals for unification with the Moscow Patriarchate are almost identical with the contemporary declarations of the present hierarchs, clergy and lay people of the ROCOR.

TWO DOCUMENTS FROM THE ISHIM-SIBERIAN DIOCESE OF THE ROCOR

One of the three clergymen in St. Petersburg, who left the ROCOR forwarded to us by fax 2 documents with permission to

use them as we please and to be free to make any comments we feel are necessary. We are publishing both documents unabridged and make our comments at the end of each one.

2/15, December, 2000
Memory of Prophet Habbakuk

To: Archimandrite Alexis (Makrinov)
Priest-monk Barsonophy (Kapralov)
Priest Paul Simakov
Official Statement

I inform you that your actions lead to perplexity by your extreme suspicions about the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR and to the creation of schism in the bosom of our Church.

If your pastoral conscience was confused and you could not serve while commemorating our bishops, you had the right to stop celebrating until the circumstances confusing for you could be clarified. This would be an act permissible within the Church. But you, without waiting for clarification and even avoiding the possibility of receiving the clarification of decisions of the Bishops Council incorrectly understood by you, jumped to conclusions and hurriedly spread your doubts among as many people as possible, while verifying your own doubts with hasty conclusions.

Heated up by your own doubts, you have dared to commit the most terrible crime against the Church – separated yourself and created an assembly against the correctly appointed ROCOR bishops, created a schism, which in the 6th canon of the 2nd Ecumenical Council is even called heresy. Such acts, according to 10th canon of the Council of Carthage may nor remain unpunished. Therefore I am forced to suspend from serving all three of you: Archimandrite Alexis (Makrinov), Priest-monk Barsonophy (Kapralov) and Priest Paul Simakov.

I ask you to stop performing any kind of services, since they might serve as a condemnation to you and all those lay people who would accepting of these acts.

I ask you very much to come to your senses and not to be the cause of perdition to many souls. What answer will you give about those whom you have scandalized? Stop your schismatic acts and then we will together look for a way out of this situation.

Your suspicions about the intention of the ROCOR bishops to unite with the MP are erroneous. They became possible only because the Epistle by the last Bishops Council was written convinced of the filial devotion of the children of our Church to their bishops.

We did not permit the thought that our children would deliberately look in our Epistle for faults, which is so characteristic only of the enemies of our Church. It is through their efforts that the spirit of suspicion and schism was implanted in our Church, but we have to overcome and root out this evil spirit.

Bishop Eutikhy,

Temporary administrator of St. Petersburg and North-Russian dioceses of the ROCOR

Almost every single sentence of Bishop Eutikhy in this statement to clergy who left ROCOR requires comment.

Speaking of "jumping to conclusions" or misunderstanding the decisions of the Council of Bishops is more than strange, when taking into consideration that the Synod of Bishops was literally packed with protests on part of clergy and lay people. To disregard the intent of the Bishops' Council to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate – means to go against all the obvious facts. As is known, one goal at the Synod of Bishops was to create a special "standing Committee on matters of unity of the Russian Orthodox Church," chaired by the main initiator of this "unity" Archbishop Mark and in addition when at least half of the members of this Committee, and even more – are his sympathizers.

In this case, the Petersburg clergy never questioned the correctness of ordinations within the Church Abroad: they only, based upon the official declarations of **whole** Council, came to the conclusion that the former Council of Bishops, as a carrier of the principles of the ROCOR, no longer exists due to cardinal changes by it from the direction of 80 years.

The 6th canon of the 2nd Ecumenical Council quoted by Bishop Eutikhy is separated into two parts: that concerning the accusation of a bishop for personal sins and the second: "But if the charge alleged against Bishop be that of some ecclesiastical offense then it is necessary to examine carefully persons of the accusers." And regarding any accusation of them even of heresy, than the very same canon explains: "And by heretics we mean both those who were aforetime cast out and those whom we ourselves have since anathematized, and also those professing to hold the true faith who have separated from our canonical bishops, and set up congregations in opposition."

The 10th canon of the Carthage Council says about the condemnation of a bishop or a cleric who "inflamed by self-conceit or pride, has though fit to offer sacrifices to God (separately from the authority of the bishop) or has believed it right to erect another altar and shall offer to God the Holy Gifts. such one shall not be allowed to go on with impunity, **since he is acting contrary to the faith and constitution of the Church.**" Such are to be anathematized. But is it not the whole Council of Bishops -- who proclaimed the heretical Moscow Patriarchate to be the true Church and which has sent to a similar heretic, the Serbian Patriarch Paul, a request for liturgical communion -- itself acted "contrary to the faith and constitution of the Church"? When those "canonically ordained bishops" publicly throw themselves into the embrace of the heretics-Ecumenists, be it the Moscow Patriarchate or some Serbs, then it is not more correct to apply to the upset clergy the 15th canon of the First and Second Council in Constantinople, which praises those who have left their false bishops even before they were condemned by a council.

The sentence stating that the "Epistle by the last Bishops Council was written under convinced of the filial devotion of the children of our Church to their bishops" can bring forth nothing but a sad smile. Without a doubt, the present bishops of the ROCOR have forgotten a very basic principle of the Church: the loyalty of clergy and lay people toward the hierarchy is exclusively conditioned by the faithfulness of this hierarchy to the traditions and principles of the holy fathers. And the remark of the necessity "to overcome and root out this evil spirit" – already sounds typically like Moscow.

The second document, under the letterhead of Bishop Eutikhy, the Administrator of the Ishim-Sibirian Diocese dated 9/22 of December 2000 # 6 is addressed to: "The suspended clergymen: Archimandrite Alexis (Makrinov), Priest-monk Barsonophy (Kapralov) and Priest Paul Simakov" is as follows:

I inform you, that your openly schismatic actions, and even more so your daring to perform the services while being suspended put you and those lay people who were led by you into schism and into a dangerous situation.

According to canon law as of now you are to be summoned before ecclesiastical court to be defrocked and those who accept your illegal actions by this do separate themselves from the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Your refusal to return to the church administration the antimensions and holy Myrrh is equal to forcible retaining of sacred objects which do not belong to you. This is a sacrilege and has to be punished as one more crime against the Church that puts you in danger of being excommunicated.

Once again we call upon you to stop your anti-church actions, not to destroy your own souls and the souls of those people whom you deceive without fear of God and lead to destruction.

Bishop Eutikhy,

Temporary Administrator of the St. Petersburg and North-Russian Diocese of the ROCOR

The second document also requires some comments.

The Fathers from St. Petersburg left the ROCOR, quite justifiably declaring the Bishops' Council and the Administration of the ROCOR to no longer exist. And indeed: while rushing into embrace of the Ecumenist MP and a similar Serbian Patriarchate, the ROCOR actually ceased to exist. Only if something, now hard to believe, might take place: that the entire Bishops' Council will renounce its Epistle, the letter to the Ecumenist Serbian Patriarch Paul, will cancel its "standing committee for the unification of the Russian Church", repent before the flock for bringing it into terrible confusion which in several parishes already has resulted in schism and that they will return to 80 year long direction of the ROCOR.

Yet, this document has also another side. As we said before, the St. Petersburg fathers left the Church Abroad on basis of the fall of the whole hierarchy into heresy. Then, why didn't they immediately return the antimensions as being given to them by the heretical bishop? Antimention is a bishop's plenary grant of authority to serve the Divine Liturgy and other services. They should have returned the antimensions of their own accord. Since they didn't do so even after a quite justified demand, their zeal regarding the Church's Truth is losing its value.

It seems that solution of this puzzle should be seen in that these fathers didn't want to close their parishes for indefinite period of time, -- until they would find "a canonical Orthodox bishop to surrender to him the administration of the diocese."

Since one of the fathers in this group once wrote in a private letter that under no conditions would he ever return to the MP or go under the omophorion of Valentin, Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir, there remains only the speculation that they will look for one of the several Greek Old Calendar groups, who very "canonically" starting with 1991 operate in the canonical territory of the Russian Autocephalous and Autonomous Churches. And these groups not only are not in communion with each other, but declare one another to be "uncanonical"!

A CRAFTY REPORT

We received from Switzerland a report to the Geneva parish members dated November 13, 2000, made by Archbishop Ambrose about the Council of Bishops held in New York in October, 2000.

We publish it exactly as we received this document.

Foreword: the actions of the Church

By tradition the Church is governed by a solid structure, which guarantees good functioning. The basic administrative element is the diocese, which is governed by the ruling bishop; parishes have no autonomy or an effective church essence.

The only authority over the ruling bishops is the Assembly (Council) of Bishops, a supreme organ of the Church, which usually is convened every two of three years (in the Serbian Church once a year) and in other Churches even more seldom. The First Hierarchy, the first among equal bishops of the whole Church, presides over the Assemblies and outside of them may express the opinion of the Church. The Synod, consisting of several bishops is a standing administration of the Church.

Council of Bishops of the ROCOR

- 1) convened in May, 1998, under difficult conditions, little satisfying due to obstacles, a certain sparseness and antagonisms, left the impression of a sort of apostasy, an impression of a Church crying over her misfortunes.

Council of Bishops of the ROCOR convened in October, 2000, which was prepared for by some bishops not without some apprehension, despite continued disagreements evoked a decisive relief, the feeling of getting out of a rut. This is not a new start, but one may look to the future with greater clarity.

most important decisions of this Council: Archbishop Seraphim of Brussels retired and was replaced by Bishop Ambrose of Geneva and Western Europe. Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco died shortly before the start of the Council and was replaced by Bishop Krill

The report of Eutikhy of Sibiria, regarding the Council of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, which was held in July, 2000, was one of the major moments of this Council:

Noticeable is a great change in mentality toward the church's relations toward the State. The Moscow Patriarchate canonized the New Martyrs, expressed a new social doctrine of the Church and corrected relations of the Church in view of the new conditions of the contemporary world. The Patriarchy declared that if a human law contradicts the divine law (forcible renunciation of the Church, promoting sin) it is the church's duty not to support the State. In this way, without formally condemning Sergianism, the Patriarchate clearly expressed that it has left Sergianism (2).

Today, as opposed to 1990, the situation radically changed. Various parts of the Russian Church as of now are obliged to look each other in the eye.

In 1987-1988, on the millennium of Russia's Baptism, the Patriarchate offered to bury the quarrel with the ROCOR; the latter responded with three conditions:

1. Acknowledgment of the holiness of the martyrs of the Soviet people
2. Renunciation of obedience to the godless state

These two conditions were fulfilled

3. Change of the relationship with Ecumenism: this is the only point, which separates us.

During the Council of October 2000

The Bishops of ROCOR made a significant step in acknowledging the great, fast and unexpected steps forward made by the Church in Russia (something the ROCOR should welcome). They have created a standing committee, with the goal of unity of the Russian Church (which is not going to bury this goal and has no intention of getting stuck, but has the intention of leading the ROCOR out of a dead end!). This Committee is chaired by Archbishop Mark of Germany who on several occasions has met with the representatives of the Patriarchate) and consists of six members selected from the wide range of views, among whom are Bishops Michael and Gabriel and two archpriests from Munich and San Francisco.

Patriarch Paul of Serbia was officially informed of the creation of this Committee,

Archbishop Mark already has traveled several times to Serbia in order to introduce this Committee and officially ask for intercession of Patriarch Paul.

Other decisions of the October Council of 2000

The council commissioned a seminar of historians, (renown but not members of the ROCOR, several of whom reside in Russia) to study the history of relationship between various parts of the Russian Church.

The Council declared four new saints (the canonization was done by the Patriarchate): Ignaty Brianchaninov, a bishop ascetic who spent 20 years in a monastery; Theophan the Recluse, a bishop ascetic who was removed from his diocese; Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow, a bishop of 50 years, and translator of the Gospel into Russian, of whom already one miracle is known; Theophil of Kiev, an elder, a great spiritual instructor.

The Council renovated its Synod.

The Council remembered its First Hierarch Metropolitan Vitaly, the oldest of all the bishops, 90 years old and in a very bad health for two years now; he no longer is able to serve after his unfortunate fall. In view of the 50th anniversary of his hierarchical status, the bishops commissioned Archbishop Laurus (of Syracuse and Abbot of Jordanville Monastery and the Rector of the Seminary) to fill the post of Locum Tenens.

- (1) ROCOR has a canonical foundation based on the Ukaz of Patriarch Tikhon # 362. The ROCOR considers itself, together with the Catacomb Church to be one of the parts of the Russian Church.
- (2) In 1927 the declaration by Sergius, Metropolitan of Moscow (self-appointed Locum Tenens after the repose of Patriarch Tikhon) – this submission to the Soviet government, which may not be judged by its essence and still had the intolerable consequences. Since that time the Church has been separated. Several bishops remained faithful to the government and Metropolitan Sergius. On the other hand, the principal group which wanted to remain truthful to Tradition, became the Catacomb Church, which in various groups exists even up to now. Some do not want or may not come out from underground. Metropolitan Sergius created a Synod of hierarchs exclusively faithful to him, in the prison established in the ancient monastery of the Solovetsky Islands, but there were enough bishops to create a synod, underground and, yet, quite canonical. From 1918 to 1945, only three bishops were never arrested in Russia. During the war Stalin realized that he cannot function without the Church, so he made the Patriarchate an

official institution of the State.”

Concerning the report of Archbishop Ambrose, in the first place the members of the Council should have said: “no one from outside, but our own”. No matter how much some members of the Bishops' Council try to persuade their ROCOR flock that nothing has changed in the direction of the Church Abroad, Archbishop Ambrose quite certainly gives it away that the last Council **prepared for by some bishops not without some apprehension ...evoked a decisive relief, the feeling of getting out of a rut.**” From which rut, if not from the very same one which has been confidently followed by the ROCOR for 80 long years in a row? It seems that those “some bishops” who prepared the Council, knew well that they are breaking with the whole history of the Church Abroad and this explains their “some apprehension”, but which finally were won over by the “convinced [as is stated by Bishop Eutikhy about the unfortunate Epistle] of the filial devotion of the children of our Church to their bishops”! It is possible that the makers of the schism were relying on the considerable lack of knowledge of contemporary Christians and the broken spirit of not the Russian people alone, but throughout the other Local Orthodox Churches.

Regarding the delight about decisions of the Moscow Council at which the Patriarchate supposedly “renounced ...and clearly expressed that it has left Sergianism.” But according to various sources of information about this Council, the name of Sergius Stragorodsky was not mentioned on the Moscow Patriarchate Council nor in general was ever mentioned!

Archbishop Ambrose rejoices that the Hierarchs of the ROCOR “made a significant in acknowledging great, fast and unexpected steps forward made by the Church in Russia” but “they have created a standing Committee with the task of unity of the Russian Church **“which is not going to bury this goal and has no intention of getting stuck, but has the intention of leading the ROCOR out of a dead end!”**”

What can be more revealing than this statement?

TRAGIC DOWNFALL OF EPISCOPATE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

Under such title we received an open letter by Mr. Razoumovsky, a member of the West European ROCOR diocese.

“The scandalous ‘Council Epistle’ of October 2000 was the last drop, which overfilled the cup of the patience of many faithful children of the ROCOR. It only confirms their conviction that bishops of the Church Abroad, with very few exceptions, long ago departed from the original path followed by this Church since 1927 and to the end of 1994, when in Lesna Convent (France) Archbishop Mark for the first time got his way with the acceptance of a resolution which **permitted meetings and conversations with the Moscow Patriarchate clergy.** This was an obviously loosened bolt from the former strong position of the ROCOR, which started long agenda of shakings which has led to today’s definite turn toward the unification with the Moscow Patriarchate.

The most respectable First Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly, despite signing the Epistle, most probably under the pressure of pushy members of the Council, outside of it, in his talks and addresses, remained a worthy successor of his three great predecessors and therefore, remained a *symbol of the ROCOR*. Actually, he has no more power to stand against the ‘powerful of this world’ which long ago took root in the ROCOR, no longer free in the way she was through all those 75 years of her existence. In her former total independence was **her true power.**

With this Epistle, the Council brought a match up to the barrel of powder.

It is written in a clumsy and surprisingly unusual style for the Church. Never did the former Epistles of ROCOR use such official, newspaper-like language.

And the main thing, this Epistle with its cynicism touched **the most essential, principle matters of our church’s being. It insulted the sacred feelings of ROCOR parishioners and now, a heavy moral responsibility before God is laid upon hierarchs for all the scandal into which they led their flock.**

Quite well-grounded outrages come to us through fax and the Internet from all over the world. Let us note the splendid articles of Hieromonk Paisii (USA), Hieromonks Vladimir and Archpriest Sergius Petrov (Canada), Father Dionisy and Priest Alferovs, Priest Paul Simakov and Fathers from Omsk: Priest Basil Saveliev and Hieromonk Tikhon (Russia), the communities in Koenigsberg and Abbess Juliana (Chile).

A number of bishops responded with suspensions of priests who ‘dared’ in a loud voice to express their sadness. Bishop Gabriel suspended Fr. Paisii, Bishop Michael suspended Fr. Vladimir, Bishop Eutikhy suspended Fathers Basil and Tikhon. The above-mentioned bishops until now presented themselves as ‘faithful’. Yet, at the Council’s sessions confronted by Archbishop Mark, who even allows himself to raise his voice, they are timid and keep silent ‘due to fear of a German’.

But these suspensions did not prevent others from honestly and freely expressing their outrage and it is useless to believe that with suspensions the episcopate can keep all silent, in the manner it is done in the army. Nowadays, with sadness one has to be convinced that no longer there is a common language and common understanding. The bishops, with a few exceptions, do not hear in the words of those who react, **a cry of the soul.** They are tempted by the **power:** they act like autocrats following the motto: ‘the law is the law’. They *suspend, threaten, order* and so forth... from the heights of their cathedras and because of their superficial lack of consideration for the deep spiritual problems of the flock in local places, there grows the **abyss** between the, so to say, ‘caste’ of the hierarchs and God’s people and this is **tragic!**

If those who wrote were to publish through the Internet some personal complaints toward their bishops, it would be self evident that bishops might have punished them. But here, **they reacted to an open, official Epistle, which long ago was also made public through the Internet and the responses to it are the voices of conscience of those numerous ROCOR members who want to remain faithful to the original path and do not want to be taken off it, being forced to do so on the part of their own hierarchs. And this is their lawful right.** You know that a clergyman of ROCOR is in it and not in any other Orthodox Church by his own convictions.

An unprecedented wave of protests has started and no suspensions of ten or thirty priests can stop it. This Epistle was understood to be a betrayal, **as treason, and one may not force the honest and zealous pastors to act against their consciences in the name of routine obedience namely to those who betray the Truth!**

Regarding this matter, Fr. Nicholas Semenoff once noted quite correctly: *'Blind obedience without the judgement of conscience is equal to total denial of freedom and can lead a subordinate person far off the track. This happened in the 1927 when a small part of the episcopate displayed a blind obedience to their supervisors ... Metropolitan Sergius and created a schismatic Moscow Patriarchate.* Consequently, if we acknowledge obedience to be an unconditional must, than we have to lift the blame from all the MP hierarchs. Then, what for did the ROCOR defend for 75 years some 'extremist utopia'? And the Epistle leads exactly to this conclusion. This is why it is **unacceptable**. This is namely why, due to **disobedience** at that time to Metropolitan Sergius, who departed from the right path, **the historical succession of the Russian Church was preserved by the ROCOR.**

Suspensions usually are for moral transgressions, but here they are **for expressing one's opinion about the defense of God's Truth!** It is just like the USSR when bishops suspended Fr. Dimitri Dudko for preaching a word of truth, which was not profitable for them. In their spiritual powerlessness, the only weapon for them remained power, a material power. Exactly like Romans and later Communists, who realizing their powerlessness to quench the faith and truth in hearts of the confessors resorted to physical persecutions: tortures and camps. Yet, with this they only strengthened the spiritual power of the martyrs.

It seems that even before achieving the desired union with the MP, the ROCOR bishops already are using the methods of the KGB.

The authoritative and well respected Fr. Benjamin Joukoff said quite to the point: *'Here and there, the conviction of the rightfulness of our Church is being lost, the love for Truth disappears. Gradually, there disappears the concrete foundation of our Church and, it seems no one is able or willing to hold on to it. But how many post factum compassionately try to save what is lost. With sadness one remembers words of the Tsar-Martyr.'*

Another venerable archpriest, with worry said the following wise words: *'It is tragic that in persons of Synod and the Council there no longer exists the authority of the Church to whom one could appeal for justice and common sense.'*

How true this is and the flock is beginning to be convinced of it by sad experience.

With the lamentable resolutions on the Council and totalitarian suspensions, which suppress the living powers within ROCOR, its episcopate totally discredited itself, undermined its authority and lost the confidence of clergymen and flock.

Due to contemporary means, information instantly circles the world and it is obvious that no matter where there are Russian people, in Russia or in the West, their souls suffer from all the misfortunes which are ripping apart our ROCOR from the inside and their wailing becomes louder and united.

One is overwhelmed by horror in recognition of what we have lived to see: who ever would think of clergymen and lay people appealing to the bishops, **pleading with them to remain steadily on the path of truth and not to go astray?** But unfortunately today one is convinced that these appeals are no longer restraining them. There inevitably arises the terrible question:

Where are the archpastors taking their flock?

Fervent prayers to the Almighty Father are necessary for much suffering Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

December 8th, 2000

K. Razumovsky"

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT ARCHBISHOP VALENTIN

The newspaper "Suzdal Novelty" on December 20 published an article entitled "For the Benefit of the Town" by A. Novitsky. It states:

In the past, a number of buildings in Suzdal were abandoned and, being unsupervised, become totally ruined. This very same fate could have happen also the House of Life, at Vasilievskaya St. # 4. But at the end of last year, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church purchased the half destroyed building. Shortly after that renovation and construction began. In October of this year the transformed building received a many functional purpose. On the first floor there are the cells for nuns of the Laying of the Garment of Holy Virgin Convent and in the eastern part of the wide corridor – there is a little cozy house church. On the second floor is a class for Sunday school, guest rooms, and a spacious museum, which relates of the tragic fate of the Russian emigration. The name itself makes the heart to vibrate – "the Museum of the White Warrior". How many Russian soldiers and officers were to drink from the bitter cup of exile!

The capable hands of laborers transformed the huge attic into a spacious conference room.

For 27 years Archbishop of Suzdal and Vladimir Valentin has lived in Suzdal and serves God and people. Through all those years in his heart there was a secret dream to continue the local tradition of the church building, since the last one

was built in the XIIIth century and the XXth century brought destruction and destruction to beautiful monuments of ancient Russian architecture. But, in the year 2000 the Christian faith exists and to mark this important event and in memory of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, Archbishop Valentin badly wanted to lay a corner stone and build a new church. And by all means in an area where there never was a church before. And so, the building was completed. On October 26th the church was consecrated and the first services begun.

And there is one more deed worthy of this man: there were published and sold his two books devoted to Suzdal.

The first, not big and in a soft cover, on excellent paper and with a text in three languages (Russian, English and German) with highly professional photographs of Maria Cherkassov, is called "A Word about Suzdal".

The second book "Suzdal and Its Sacred Places" is richly supplied with photographs by the Suzdal photographers M. Cherkassov, Sobolev and Borshchevsky, who have photographs of churches destroyed between 1930-1950. This one has substantial material (again in three languages) and has a hard cover.

The author of both books, the administrator of the ROAC, Archbishop Valentin, is a man of amusing soul, a true citizen of the Fatherland. May the Lord strengthen his health and prolong it to complete much more.

SOME CATHOLICS DREAM OF A NEW DOGMA

For quite some time Catholic periodicals have been reporting that within that church there is growing a strong movement asking the Vatican to proclaim a new dogma which is to "elevate" the importance of the Theotokos for Roman Catholics and make her "Co-redemptrix", equal to her Divine Son.

"The New York Times" of December 23, 2000, published an extensive article by Jan Russell regarding this matter.

A certain Mark Miravalle, a professor in the Catholic Franciscan University in Ohio is the main figure in the declaration of this heretical teaching by Catholics. This particular Catholic university is known for its conservatism. Miravalle insists that "The world of today is in desperate need of a mother" and because of that, every day the Vatican gets huge boxes with petitions addressed to the Pope that he exercise his power and announce the new dogma. These petitions already exceed 6 million signatures from 148 countries. This Miravalle movement is strongly supported by 550 Catholic bishops and 42 Cardinals, among them the renown late Cardinal O'Connor and Mother Teresa from India.

The basic points of the proposed dogma consist in that the Mother of God should be "promoted" almost to the level of a fourth person of the Holy Trinity (which reminds one of the Bulgakov Sophianist heresy from Paris). If the Pope approves this new teaching, the Catholics would be obliged to believe that Holy Virgin is Co-redemptrix with her divine Son in the salvation of the human race; that She is an mediatrix between man and God and has special powers to grant graces and as such, influences the judgment of the Lord.

It seems that the Pope is sympathetic to this idea, because on several occasions he privately received Mr. Miravalle. The reporters know from words of Miravalle that "All I can tell you, is that I am personally confident that the Holy Father will make this solemn definition of the Mother of Jesus at the most appropriate time. It is not a question of if. It is only question of when."

As always at the political Vatican, the question of proclaiming the new dogma might significantly reflect upon Ecumenist activity. This project is also questioned by the Catholics. Thus a French monk Rene Laurentin said that "accepting this dogma would be the equivalent of launching bombs at Protestants and would widen the breach between the Vatican and the Eastern Orthodox Church"

MUSICAL GROUP OF GREEK MONKS

The bulletin of "Orthodox Christian News Service" of December 20th reported that in Greece a group of monks was established who during the last summer issued a musical videocassette of so-called "rock-music". This cassette gained tremendous success and by now the monks are working on the production of another disc, mainly of their own musical and textual poetical content. The group is headed by Archimandrite Nectarios Mulatsiotis.

As per the bulletin, this monastic group calls itself "Eleftheri", or "The Free" and it is competing with Madonna and a dozen Greek "super-stars". The idea to create such a monastic troupe came about because on the lands of the monastery there is a boys' camp, the inhabitants of which love contemporary music with unchristian texts.

The titles of the monastic musical production are numerous and are distinguished by a very modern style. One of the songs is called "I am a chip, so small, that will lead you to slavery" or the first disc with 10 songs "I learned to live free". In a whole number of songs the Lord's name is not mentioned.

Archimandrite Nectarios believes that contemporary music has no content and that their success is due only to the new texts. In a short period of time the monks have sold 52,000 discs. At the beginning of the year a new disc will be released, which will be called "S.O.S". It will warn against the so-called "globalization", of powerful technology and will promote Christian ideas. As Archimandrite Nektarios says: "Young people listen to a certain type of music. We need a modern rhythm with good lyrics... We are trying to break the mold of the monk as being stiff. Christ was social. He was friendly". Therefore, the monks play ball with the boys, wear civilian clothes and are very happy when they are enthusiastically greeted on the streets. The unexpected success turned their heads and in a short while they hope to produce new discs outside of Greece.

Somehow the thought arises: was it worth it for those "monks" to bind themselves with monastic vows and what would the true monks, their predecessors of even some 100 years ago, say? In ancient monasteries the young novices were kept quite separate.

CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF ECUMENICAL "UNITY"

The magazine "U.S. News & World Report" of January, 2001, published an article about successful ecumenical union of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, having 5.2 million members, and the Episcopal Church with 2.5 million members.

Last week both of these groups celebrated "full communion". According to the mutual agreement both confessions may share the clergy and combine little communities into one. The sacraments (which Protestants never had) will be mutually accepted, while "allowing both (groups) to retain their own creeds and structures".

On the eve of the joint service in the National Cathedral in Washington, the representatives of both denominations stressed that "the venture would enable Lutherans and Episcopalians to "speak with one voice" and share opportunities for ministry.

The Episcopal Bishop Frank Griswold said that this "is a sign to a divided world" and that both churches "have made common cause together and are entering full communion of hope".

The Lutheran Bishop George Anderson said: "We are here today saying it can be done".

The very same article gives interesting information about contemporary "religions". According to the "World Christian Encyclopedia," the number of "religions" already surpasses 33,800 and approximately 10 new ones are created each week!

AT THE LAST MINUTE: On December 29/January 11 at 6:00 PM at the age of 96 in the old age home in Tolstoy Foundation Her Imperial Highness Princess Vera Constantinovna of Russia died, the youngest daughter of Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovich, a famous poet and supervisor over all of Russia's military schools. The entire family was distinguished by a rare piety and Princess Vera had three brothers, Saint New Martyrs John, Igor and Constantine, martyred in Alapayevsk together with St. Elisabeth, the sister of the Tsarina.