



# CHURCH NEWS

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## TO CLERGY, MONASTICS, EDITORS OF WEBSITES AND PAGES IN THE INTERNET, MEMBERS OF THE ROAC AN EXHORTATION

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church is compelled to direct your attention to the fact that in the past the Synod of Bishops gave its blessing to the editors of the websites and pages on the Internet to witness to the Gospel Truth.

However, some members of our Church who actively participate on the Internet are preaching not the Truth, but a perverted understanding of Orthodox teachings, contradicting the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Church and the Local Ecumenical Councils.

To our great regret, the sinful emotions of some the "missionaries" have prevailed over common sense and therefore, the activity of these "zealot theologians" became a great scandal not only to the members of our Church but also for other Christians; not only in Russia but also to those outside her borders who might have united themselves to True Orthodoxy, but now hold back questioning our Orthodox confession.

The Synod of bishops is required for the very last time to remind all members of the ROAC who work on the Internet to dismantle websites and pages created by members of the ROAC with information regarding the subjects: "Rock Music", "The Suicide Club", "The God's Name Cult", "The Name Worshipers" as well as "Romanitas", which harm Orthodoxy and are a source of great scandal.

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Autonomous Church insistently appeals to the God loving flock to offer repentance to God for their errors. To renounce slander, lies, hatred, malice. To enter the path of Truth, evangelical forgiveness and Christian love. Not to apostatize from the path of Truth and to confess the Orthodox faith in the way required by the Holy Fathers and the Teachers of God's Church.

In cases of persistence in following the path abominable to God of spreading heresy, schism, disobedience and opposition, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church will be forced to **SUSPEND** clergy from serving and to **EXCOMMUNICATE** lay people from Holy Communion.

The President of the Synod of Bishops, + VALENTIN, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir,

Members of the Synod of Bishops: Theodore, Archbishop of Borisovo and Sanino, Seraphim, Archbishop of Sukhum and Abhasia.

### A HEARING REGARDING SUIT BY METR. VALENTIN AGAINST NEWSPAPER "PRIZYV"

The news agency "Vertograd" mailing # 206 of January 17<sup>th</sup> published the following information:

"In the Lenin regional court of the city of Vladimir, on January 16<sup>th</sup> the hearing of the civil suit by the President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian (Autonomous) Church, Valentin, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir against the local newspaper 'Prizyv'. During the past year this newspaper acquired a scandalous reputation by a series of articles containing malicious slander and insults against the First Hierarchy of the ROAC. In one of the articles the newspaper even published an appeal for the physical execution of Metropolitan Valentin.

"All articles of 'Prizyv' about Metropolitan Valentin lacked any information sources and were not signed by their author. The newspaper also called the First Hierarchy of the ROAC a 'criminal' prior to any finding by the court, and that directly contradicts the Russian Constitution.

"The judge of the regional Lenin court, Michael Zaglazeyev will submit to the court the suit of Metropolitan Valentin against the newspaper in February".

### BISHOP EVTIKHY "DEFENDS" METROPOLITAN VITALY

The official Internet website of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR on December 16/29<sup>th</sup> 2001 has published (in five pages) some explanations by Bishop Evtikhy of Ishima, entitled "In defense of honorable name of Metropolitan Vitaly". In all fairness it should be called a "defense" of the Council of Bishops and partly, of Bishop Michael!

Bishop Evtikhy starts his composition with the words: "Throughout the year 2001 our Church was shaken by blows, leading toward internal schism"... "And of course it is common knowledge, and especially to our enemies, that the most destructive weapons against the Church are the creation within her of schism and quarrels".

The right reverend author made a mistake of one year. "The shocks" began immediately after the ending of the Council of sad memory, which was held in October of 2000, when this Council published an Epistle in which it was bluntly stated that "the new social conception" which was accepted by the Council of the Moscow Patriarchate, actually did "cancel out the 'Declaration' by Metropolitan Sergius"; at that time the ROCOR Council established a committee "regarding the unity of the Russian Church" and commissioned Archbishop Mark to deliver a scandalous letter to the Serbian Patriarch Paul with the request to assist "with the longed for rapprochement and spiritual unity among the separated parts of the Russian Church" – meaning between the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate! At the same time, the ROCOR Council asked the bishop second most active after the Ecumenical Patriarch – the ecumenist Serbian Patriarch Paul – "not to push us away from the liturgical communion with you, because we do wish to glorify our Savior Christ the God with you with one mouth and one heart".



The author of the Council's Epistle "to the beloved children in Homeland and Diaspora" which shocked the faithful so much, was none other than Bishop Evtikhy himself who now is so very disturbed by "schisms and the quarrels"; and the authors of the letter to Serbian Patriarch were Bishop Alexander with Archbishop Mark. All these documents were signed **the entire body of the Bishops' Council**, excluding only Bishop Barnabas, who did not sign the Epistle, but only later took notice of the letter to the heretic Serbian Paul. Some time later (actually a year later) a few more bishops began to "remove" their signatures (5 altogether).

There is no doubt that at the Council of 2001 its members were fully aware that the above mentioned documents immediately stirred up a real uproar among the clergy and faithful, one can say, -- from all parts of the world where there are ROCOR parishes. The protests were individual and by various groups. Never the less, the Synod of Bishops on several occasions confirmed that its new position remains unchanged.

Therefore, it can be asserted with sufficient conviction that among the entire ROCOR Council of Bishops Bishop Evtikhy is probably the main schismatic, who now states that "the treachery and base actions of the authors and executors of the latest schism is concluded in fact that they have been driven by two goals — to create the schism and to damage the good name of Metropolitan Vitaly"!

At the Council of 2000, the previously unheard of in the ROCOR restriction of the rights of Metropolitan Vitaly as the President of the Synod of Bishops and of the Council of Bishops by the creation of the office of the "Deputy President with all the powers" (Minutes of the Bishops Council # 9). The offer of Archbishop Lazarus to give Metropolitan Vitaly the right to wear 2 panagias and have the title of "Beatitude" — was not supported by anyone and was only briefly commented on by Archbishop Laurus, that the upcoming feast of Apostles Peter and Paul would be the fiftieth anniversary of the First Hierarch in his ministry as a bishop!

Bishop Evtikhy states that at the Council of 1994 he has noticed that "the stones were flying into our backyard from various directions — but were aimed at our First Hierarch Metropolitan Vitaly." However, the stones directed at Metropolitan Vitaly were coming not from the enemies of the Church Abroad, but namely from members of the Council of Bishops, when they rudely yelled at him over the publication of his excellent pre-conciliar epistle and finally demanded the aged Hierarch's resignation, just a few days before celebrating such an exceptionally rare jubilee! The Metropolitan's Epistle was hidden from the faithful in the Synod's cathedral and a few brave clergymen who announced it in their parishes were strongly reprimanded by the Secretary to the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel! This epistle warned against connections with the Moscow Patriarchate and ecumenism!

Then, following this "defense" of Metropolitan Vitaly, we find out that "Metropolitan Vitaly has fallen into the feebleness of old age, loosing the possibility of properly analyzing and estimating events and documents, which was used by the sons of craftiness..." "And when the sickness of the Metropolitan had progressed further, he started to forget his collocutors during short conversations, not to speak of the subject of a conversation, thus began the utter bacchanal".

After describing over two pages the real and exaggerated feeblenesses of the aged Metropolitan, Bishop Evtikhy does not stop at plain slander. Metropolitan Valentin neither "accidentally" nor deliberately was in Fr. Vladimir Shishkoff's car. He had been his guest for a whole week and the meeting of both Metropolitans was indeed a total surprise.

Under the pretext of "a defense" of the good name of Metropolitan Vitaly Bishop Evtikhy leans toward a soft defense of the Synod of Bishops and, in particular, of Bishop Michael. Bishop Evtikhy is surprised that "people so easily believe and take as a basis for their schismatic actions in the controversy an outcry of disinformation... At present, according to general agreement, the most convincing agitation against the Council of Bishops are the photographs which depict the incident of the abduction by force of Metropolitan Vitaly to the Synod from his notorious surroundings, undertaken by Bishop Michael. Although, logically speaking, one can recognize as proper the wish of Bishop Michael to snatch the beloved Metropolitan Vitaly from the entourage which is damaging his name".... "But we should evaluate things not according to logic, but ecclesiastically. And the ecclesiastical evaluation speaks not against, but in favor of, the Council of Bishops. The point is, that at the Council of Bishops, the opinion of Metropolitan Laurus against an abduction of Metropolitan Vitaly, to no matter where, even against his sick will, was unanimously supported. The events recorded in the photographs and the wide reaction to them demonstrate that Metropolitan Laurus and the Council of Bishops were right in their preventive decision not to use any force against the retired Metropolitan Vitaly, but Bishop Michael was not right in his, probably noble but emotional haste, which violated the Council's decision." (Emphasis by "Ch. N.")

Here the casuistry of Bishop Evtikhy is without equal. Here we read that Metropolitan Laurus and the Council were against abduction of Metropolitan Vitaly no matter where, "even against his sick will", then it turns out that Metropolitan Laurus and the Council were right in their decision not to use any force regarding Metropolitan Vitaly!

And all of this is the fault of the cursed photographs! Were it not for them, how easy would it have been to pack the old man into a limousine and bring him to the Synod. But, again, Bishop Michael overdid it and in the emotional haste of his love, only stood motionless and looked on as the guards hired by him drag the old Metropolitan into the car, while pushing him from behind his knees. Certainly, all of this was a demonstration of his filial love that was so badly misunderstood by the "schismatics"!

The news agency Vertograd. Mailing # 196 dated December 28<sup>th</sup> quoting the words of the First Hierarch of the ROAC, Metropolitan Valentin, describing the reaction of the Bishops in Russia to the schism in the ROCOR, gave interesting details about the actions of Bishop Agathangel, which reveal him to be a person with very unstable convictions.

So, now it is known that "in order to become a bishop, he came to Suzdal, together with Priest-monk Cyril, with the proposal to retire Archbishop Lazarus and promising to bring a statement about his mental illness, the very same hierarch who used to be his spiritual father and benefactor and not only tonsured him a monk, but also ordained to the clergy". After becoming a bishop with the blessing of Archbishop Lazarus, Bishop Agathangel "proposed to separate from the ROCOR and to create a Provisionally Supreme Church Administration. A bit later, after not being recognized as a bishop by the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR, Bishop Agathangel petitioned the Bishops (members of the PSCA) to let him temporarily go to USA with the promise that he will return after his ordination is approved by the Synod".

As is known, remaining in Russia for some six months under suspension by the Synod of Bishops, he later was recognized and not only didn't he return to the Russian Hierarchs, but even started to rudely abuse Metropolitan Valentin, who participated in his ordination in Suzdal!

In addition to his former "noble" role while belonging to the body of the Russian Hierarchs, Bishop Agathangel became a traitor again. "At the conference in Voronezh (September 4-6, 2001) Bishop Agathangel promised to support Metropolitan Vitaly and signed all the documents of this conference. But when he attended the Council of the ROCOR, he abruptly changed his positions and separated himself from the bishops in Russia". Archbishops Lazarus and Bishop Benjamin fully supported Metropolitan Vitaly and did not recognize Metropolitan Laurus as their First Hierarch. Under secular conditions, it is customary not to shake hands with such individuals!

Metropolitan Valentin pointed out that the majority of clergy and lay people do not recognize the pro-Moscow Metropolitan Laurus and commemorate Metropolitan Vitaly. But here again there are problems, because Metropolitan Vitaly firstly renounced any communion with the group of Metropolitan Cyprian, then declared he temporarily is returning to the former position of recognizing him. Metropolitan Valentin stated a very negative opinion about Metropolitan Cyprian and said: "Therefore, while the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile identifies herself with the heretic Cyprianites, who confess a veiled form of ecumenism, we cannot support her in the future, because we, as well as the other True Orthodox Churches consider the Cyprianites to be heretics".

This interview of Metropolitan Valentin was given BEFORE the period when Metropolitan Vitaly changed his mind about this important matter for the third time!

According to Vertograd "The Synod of Bishops at its December meeting fully approved the stand of Metropolitan Valentin, regarding the situation in the ROCOR".

#### **A DECLARATION**

#### **OF METR. OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR, VALENTIN, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AUTONOMOUS CHURCH IN CONNECTION WITH THE OFFICIAL ACCUSATION IN THE CRIMINAL CASE**

(Published in the magazine "Suzdal Diocesan Herald" # 12; July-October 2001)

In September of the current year the investigator for the prosecutor of the city of Vladimir, I. A. Yegorov, presented to me an official accusation of corruption of minors and of introducing them to alcoholic drink. I was presented with "The summons putting (me) on trial as accused" with a stamp "coordinated" with the signature of the public prosecutor of Vladimir region, A. V. Shaikov, and consists of lies from beginning to the end.

In the person of those who "suffered" came forward: the son of the former priest A. Osetrov – Andrew Osetrov, a boy friend of one of Osetrov's daughters; Yegor Derevianko and also the brothers Eugene and Benjamin Kutcik. It is clear that Andrew Osetrov is interested in reporting invented details. Regarding the brothers Kutcik – one of them, Benjamin, twice wrote me repentant letters stating that he has slandered me because A. Osetrov promised him 500 rubles, but he does not need them and does not want to sell his conscience. The second Kutcik – Eugene — before witnesses demonstrated his disgust with the behavior of Osetrov and offered his services to defend me. Probably, they have reported these invented accusations under pressure from the investigator.

With full responsibility I declare that I categorically reject the accusations presented against me. Behind all of it there is nothing but a crudely falsified case in which one can see nothing but the aim of destabilizing the Russian Autonomous Church, -- the very same Church which has inherited the Catacomb Church which preserved the light of unharmed Orthodoxy under conditions of the Soviet persecutions.

Those who are striving to destroy our Church possibly do not understand themselves what sort of danger they create not only to the cause of spiritual revival of our Homeland, but also the transformation of Russia into a powerful state, whose citizens might be certain of a defense of their social and religious rights.

**+ Metropolitan Valentin**

NOTE: by Mrs. V. Schatiloff

While in Suzdal during last summer, I accidentally happened to witness the disgust of Benjamin Kutcik over the behavior of A. Osetrov and his statement to Archbishop Theodore about being offered 500 rubles to slander Metropolitan Valentin.



After my return to the States, I was informed about change of mind of B. Kutcik. Therefore, I have sent to Suzdal my own statement about this first statement of Kutsik, certified by a notary public, to be forwarded to the procurator's office.

The representatives of the civil authorities who accuse Metropolitan Valentin are "former" Communists who in this manner settle their old scores with Metropolitan Valentin.

### **BISHOP ANTHONY (GRABBE) ACCEPTED INTO THE ROAC**

With an ukase to Bishop Anthony (Grabbe) signed by the President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, Metropolitan Valentin, and by Archbishop Theodore, Administrator of the ROAC, dated 16/29<sup>th</sup> of December 2001, # 200 he was informed that according to his petition the Synod of Bishops at its meeting of November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2001 acknowledged his ordination and is accepting him into the bosom of the ROAC.

After the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, Archimandrite Anthony left the ROCOR and joined the Greek Old Calendar Church in Athens presided over by the Archbishop Chrysostomos and in New York, by Metropolitan Paisios. In September of 1996, Archimandrite Anthony was consecrated bishop of Talantia by 4 hierarchs, 2 of whom came especially from Greece. However, soon after that, Metropolitan Paisios joined the New Calendar Ecumenical Patriarchate. Therefore, Bishop Anthony severed any communion with him and left this Greek jurisdiction.

For 18 years Archimandrite Anthony was Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem. At present, he is the President of the Orthodox Palestine Society of the Holy Land.

Being well acquainted with Greek psychology and their instability, Bishop Anthony decided to join the canonically steadfast Russian Autonomous Church, whose First Hierarch is Metropolitan Valentin.

Now, after receiving a positive response to his petition, Bishop Anthony is a member of the Episcopate of the ROAC, which was so strongly supported by his father, the late Bishop Gregory.

### **ABOUT A RESOLUTION OF THE PASTORAL CONFERENCE OF CANADIAN AND AMERICAN CLERGY**

The Internet 'Listok' ("Little Leaf") which disseminates information with the blessing of Metropolitan Vitaly on December 16/29<sup>th</sup> 2001 published a resolution of the Pastoral Conference of Canadian and American clergy regarding the matter of Eucharistic Communion with Metropolitan of Oropos and Fili, Cyprianos.

The resolution for very detailed and sound reasons renounces the clever teachings of Metropolitan Cyprianos and is most probably drafted by Protopresbyter Victor Melekhov. Unfortunately, in the concluding paragraph of this text there is an important error: in 1974 the ROCOR had no connections with this Greek group.

The resolution is signed by Metropolitan Vitaly and Bishops Sergius and Vladimir. Bishops Barnabas and Bartholomew have noted their agreement. It was signed also by 10 priests, one deacon and one abbess.

In connection with the events in church life for 2002 the parish roster is of certain interest. The Canadian diocese has 30 parishes and communities. Of them 11 are "ministered to by diocesan clergy". Among the ones listed as belonging to the Canadian diocese are Transfiguration Skete and the Montreal house belonging to Metropolitan Vitaly, but listed as being under Bishop Michael!

### **ST. NICHOLAS PARISH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX AUTONOMOUS CHURCH IN STATEN ISLAND, NY**

After many years' interruption regular services were restored at the St. Nicholas church on Staten Island during the Nativity. The very first liturgy was attended by Thirty faithful, who in part consisted of parishioners from Our Lady of Kazan Church, who followed their pastor and in part new ones.

The address of the new parish is: **St. Nicholas Orthodox Church; 79 Harrison St. (lower level); Stapelton; Staten Island, NY 10304.** For the schedule of services call: **Tel. (718) 777-2836** or the rector: **V. Rev. Archpriest Vladimir Shishkoff; Elmwood Park, NJ 07407; Tel. (201) 794-3062, Fax (201) 794-3450.**

Gradually an inventory is being assembled for the newly opened church. Thus, the priest (formerly of ROCOR) Fr. Anthony Gavalas donated 2 metal candle stands and a table for memorial services. A lady living in Chicago, a specialist in sewing vestments, called to offer her help to sew anything needed free of charge for the new church. Thus, it is clear that in a short while there will be a small but very cozy church.

### **FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS (A letter to Archb. Anthony of Geneva, October 20<sup>th</sup>/November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1992)**

Your Eminence, dear Right Reverend Vladyka!

I thank you for the letter of October 26<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, a certain chaos continues. On October 5<sup>th</sup> there was a Synod meeting. At it no one mentioned the consecration of Znosko. [This refers to Bp. Metrophan Znosko-Borovsky who reposed after this issue of "Ch. News" was composed on Feb. 15/2, 2002.] It was discussed almost two years ago. After that he published an article with critical of the position of our Synod and I responded to it, but mainly to Kiselev, because Znosko was criticizing the Synod's positions and expressed himself in favor of compromises with the MP. While in Russia he was a guest of the Patriarchate, did not visit a single one of our parishes and has donated \$8, 000 to the Patriarchate.

Much later, when his name no longer was being mentioned as a candidate, I recently quite accidentally found out that his consecration has been approved without a new decision by the Synod and without notification of it to the members of the Synod. Meanwhile, he has sent me an extremely rude letter, which I didn't complain about and was ready to ignore. However, I considered that such an affront against a bishop of our Church, at least demands an apology before consecration, which I was also ready to accept, if his help was needed in the diocese. I have personally handed the Metropolitan a memo stating that the insult to a bishop, according to the 55<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Canon is punishable by the defrocking. During the conversation I four times asked the Metropolitan to read my short memo, but with no result, although he agreed with me, that Znosko should ask my pardon. A week went by, but I have received nothing. The nomination of your clergyman as a candidate, without investigation and your agreement and without knowing his biography, is also amazing. As far as I know, he has no theological education. [The clergyman mentioned is priest Symeon Donskov, now Bishop Michael, "Ch. N"].

In general, I fear rash decisions without previous study of a matter. The real Secretary of the Synod, who should be on hand and give information, does not have anyone in the office and answers to inquiries sometimes can be given only by the cleaning help. In the most difficult days during the War we did not have such disorganization. To this must be added the disintegration of our church organization in Russia, where with normal procedures, but with difficulties and sadness only Bishop Valentin rules his diocese. Our case in Russia does not improve, but is in state of decline. The influx of faithful has stopped and the Patriarchate's members mock us. Bishop Barnabas, with his trust of "Pamyat", did much damage.

The harmful woman you write about does a lot of damage although probably she means well. But she is only a personal secretary to the Metropolitan and has nothing to do with the Synod office. Therefore, when the President and the Secretary are absent from the Synod, there remains only a vacuum. You should have raised this question. After all, there was recently a case when a decision made by the President had to be revoked in contradiction to his own [previous decision] which was unknown to the Deputy Secretary.

All these matters have to be resolved in the Synod, but beforehand within the inner circle, including you. If I can be of help in any way, despite my age, certainly I am always ready to help, regardless of my weakness.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain with love in Christ

+ Bishop Gregory

#### **A Letter to Metropolitan Vitaly, dated April 21/ May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1994**

Christ is Risen, Your Eminence!

I have received your letter of April 12/25<sup>th</sup> and I want to explain something to you that might be difficult for you to accept due to your prejudice against me.

The Ukase # 362 by Patriarch Tikhon was a prophetic act. We see how quickly after its application the flock of Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin began to grow. Parishes not only do not leave them, but more are coming and there are more petitions from the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate to be accepted.

Earlier we used the Ukase of 7/20 as a justification of our separation from Moscow, but our Council did not apply the freedom [it provided] to claims to rule over Moscow, which are beyond our capacity.

**No one** in Russia accepts your suspension.

I see the Synod in everything did not pay any attention to the context of the prophetic ukase of the Patriarch.

The tone of the last resolution is leaning toward negotiations, which, of course, are inevitable. It is most important that they would be conducted in a friendly atmosphere. [From the letter of Bishop Valentin to Bishop Gregory is clear that Archbishop Mark did everything possible to create misunderstandings among the bishops in Russia, therefore the friendly negotiations are mentioned, "Ch. N."]

Vladyka! It is still not too late, at least at the Council to turn the helm toward cooperation with the Russian Bishops. My friendly suggestion to you is not to cause a war with Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin, but treat them in a friendly manner. The Communist agents are hoping we will fight with them, instead of cooperating. Do not yield to them.

But, the release of Bishop Barnabas from any responsibility for his immeasurable number of canonical infractions, together with total ecclesiastical ignorance make continuation of his episcopal ministry impossible and this is something the conscience of our flock can not be reconciled to. His unusual privileges are a bad example for our new bishops and clergymen.

Neither the Synod nor the President has such extended powers and this decision will be considered as the arbitrariness of the old émigrés. The Council will be forced to return to this matter.

Vladyka! Do not destroy the Church Abroad and your own authority!

† Bishop Gregory

#### **PASTORAL MEETING IN ISHIMA**

**According to the Internet agency Vertograd.Razsylka # 196, in the middle of December of last year Bishop Evtikhy gathered a pastoral conference in the cathedral of Ishima city. Only 15 clergymen attended it and thus "more than half of the diocese parishes were not represented."**

As per this report, Bishop Evtikhy strongly criticized the clergy who refused to accept Archbishop Laurus as their new Metropolitan and instead united around Metropolitan Vitaly.



As a result of the schism that was created in the ROCOR after the Council of Bishops in 2001, the dioceses of Bishop Evtikhy shrank almost in half. So the Far East deanery (except parishes in the Hebrew autonomous region -- one exists in the former Mother Russia!), the parishes in Omsk, Nizhniya and Verkhniya Tura, Shchadrinsk as well as in Moscow and St. Petersburg have left.

Bishop Evtikhy seemed not to be upset by such a substantial loss of his flock and declared that now "there remained those of the same mind" and he "no longer has to prove he is right".

At this conference Bishop Evtikhy also explained that Eucharistic Communion with the ultra-ecumenical Serbian Church should not be severed because "this is exactly what for a whole decade the leadership of the MP was pressuring the Serbian Patriarch to do".

Either the information reaches distant Siberia only after two years, or Bishop Evtikhy deliberately hid from his clergy that during the summer of 2000 the Serbian Patriarch complied with Alexis Ridiger's request and in connection with appointment of a Serbian priest to serve in the ROCOR church in Bari wrote a very humiliating letter in which he called Church Abroad schismatic!

To defend his position the bishop overestimated in his statement by saying that "several hierarchs" wanted to exit the WCC. According to the statement made to one of the editors of the Serbian Patriarchal newspaper "Pravoslavlje," it was Bishop Amfilohije, who raised the question of ecumenism, but he got no support from the other bishops.

### ECUMENICAL PRAYERS IN ASSISI

According to "The New York Times" of January 2002, on the initiative of the Pope an ecumenical prayer for peace in the world was again held in Assisi (Italy). It was attended in this or that manner, by all the "Orthodox" churches, including Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who sat not far from the Pope. The delegations represented the following churches: Antioch, Moscow Patriarchate, Albania, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Serbia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Polish Churches.

This prayer was organized at a place near the 13<sup>th</sup> century basilica. Some 300 representatives of various religions, including African pagans, Buddhists, Hindus, followers of Zoroaster and others attended it. The newspaper happily notes that this time the Pope managed to gather a substantial group of representatives of religions from the Middle East. More than 30 Muslim representatives and no less than a dozen of Jews, representing renown Israeli organizations also participated in this gathering.

According to the "Vertograd" news agency, only the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop of Canterbury refused the invitation!

The very first such gathering was organized in 1986, then in 1993 and in 1999.

The Pope opened this fourth gathering with a speech about peace, after which the participants separated into different groups in order to pray according their own customs. In order not to "scandalize" non-Christians the crucifixes were removed from all the places of worship!

The Moscow Patriarchate, which insists that it is no longer involved in the Ecumenical Movement, but remains in this organization only for the sake of "witnessing" Orthodoxy in the world, was represented at this gathering on a high level. She didn't follow the example of the Buddhists and Anglicans since her delegation was headed by Pitirim, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk, Innocent, Bishop Korsun and Hilarion, Bishop of Kerch.

"Vertograd" quotes one of the members for inter-Christian relations of the Foreign Department Relations of the MP that "such a high level of representation testifies to acknowledging peace as the main condition for well being". He also added that: "The Moscow Patriarchate intends to participate in any one of the measures offered by the organizers including the worship services headed by the Pope". When asked how common prayers with representatives of non-Christian confessions relate to the canons, the representative of the MP Foreign Relations Department declared that "the grade of other confessions in this action so far remains unknown".

A newspaper "The National Catholic Reporter" responded to the events in Assisi with a long article. This newspaper of February 1<sup>st</sup> explains that despite the customary positive reaction to such prayers in the media, actually, everything is not as wonderful as the Pope would like it to be. We learn that in the past, Catholics were permitted in Assisi to use their churches for various rituals. When the Buddhists burned their aromatic incense on the one of the Catholic altars many Catholics were scandalized.

Also in this last case Vatican had to confront a 78-year-old Belgian Jesuit Dupius, who in 1962-1965 opposed the decisions of the Vatican II Council. He was for some 36 months under special Vatican investigation. Dupius is considered to be a moderate thinker, but he poses a question about religious pluralism: is religious pluralism simply a fact of life... or is it what God wants?

John Allen, a reporter of a newspaper in Rome feels that the Pope Paul "obviously respects, even loves, other religious traditions" and to demonstrate it he writes that this Pope was the first to visit the mosque in Damascus last May. The Pope entered the mosque, took off his shoes and walked arm-in-arm with the grand mufti, Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro. When the Pope went to Kazakhstan, many Muslims attended his mass.

Another Jesuit, Fr. Thomas Michel, a renown specialist in Muslim matters said that he thinks the prayers in Assisi are good, but there should be also a practical approach too: "Is it better option to wait until all the theological problems are solved before we come together? The other option is that we come together and do what we can now".

This Jesuit was one of the organizers of the Assisi prayers and he said that "in 1986 it was very difficult to get almost anybody. We had three or four Muslims and a handful of Jews. Many Christian groups refused to take part, even conservative Catholics. Non-Christians were asking: Do the Catholics and the Pope have an ulterior motive, a hidden agenda?" But now he noted that there are many more participants and also the Pope managed to secure such controversial "worshippers" as Jews and Muslims.

In the connection with the prayers in Assisi an Internet board [ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU](mailto:ORTHODOX@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU) in # 122 published an interview with M P Bishop Ilarion Kerchinsky about this ecumenist gathering.

Q. *All religions oppose terrorism. Patriarch Alexei sent you, with two others to Assisi. So I presume that indicates the Russian Orthodox Church agrees with this initiative?*

A. It is very important that all religions should be united to fight against terrorism, because you will always find people who will misuse religions and use it not for peace purposes but for wars or creating conflicts. So we must proclaim very clearly – all of us, Christians and Muslims and Jews and representatives of other religions – that wars, conflicts, violence, have nothing to do with religion. The heart of every religion is a quest for peace.

Q. *Let us speak about relations between Moscow and Rome. Are they frozen or are they warming?*

A. Relations are not frozen, but they are difficult. And they are difficult precisely because there are people in Ukraine, who, in the name of religion, exercise violence. Until this is stopped – until our relations there are normalized – there will be no peace between Catholics and Orthodox. This is what our relationship is tense. But we are looking for a better future and we continue our conversations with Roman Catholic Church.

Q. *Cardinal Kasper will be in Moscow next month. Have you been talking with him about this trip?*

A. Yes, he will come to Moscow. We are looking for a breakthrough in our relationship, because we understand we cannot continue along with the same lines. We need constructive proposals from the Vatican, not just nice words.

Q. *We have heard reports that (Moscow Catholic) Archbishop Kondrusiewicz might organize a meeting in Moscow on the topic of proselytism. Would you attend such a meeting?*

A. I don't know what kind of meeting you mean. We are ready to negotiate.

Q. *Do you think unity between Catholics and Orthodox could help to bring peace in the world?*

A. Definitely. We are the two traditional Christian religions. We must understand that there are many Christian confessions who have lost the sense of tradition and who do not preserve the initial faith of the Christian Church, who are influenced by liberal ways of thinking. It is only the Orthodox and the Catholics who are able to preserve the traditional principles at theological, moral and other levels, including the level of spiritual life. This is why we need to be united as much as possible, and the fact that we are divided does a real harm to the Christian witness in the world.

Q. *So, what would be, at this point, the next step toward unity between both?*

A. We must solve all the problems related to Uniatism and proselytism.

Q. *Do you think a meeting between Patriarch Alexei and the Pope would help to foster unity?*

A. Yes, I definitely think that such a meeting would have a very historical significance because that would be the first meeting ever between the head of the Church of Rome and the Church of Russia. But this meeting has to be prepared. It is not only to shake hands, to make beautiful pictures that the two heads should meet each other. They have to prepare carefully their positions, in order that such a meeting would provide a breakthrough in our relationship.

Q. *Do we need a special bi-lateral commission to prepare for such a meeting?*

A. We do not need to create any new commission because there are appropriate boards in each Church to negotiate. But we need to come to a better understanding of the situation. And from the Catholic side, we especially expect that they should bring constructive proposals not just beautiful and nice words about peace.

Q. *What kind of constructive proposals?*

A. I cannot go into details of the situation, but everybody knows that it is not peaceful – that a conflict still exists, that there are places where the Orthodox have no place to worship. And I do not think, until this is solved, any significant progress could not be achieved in our relationship.

In this interview with a representative of the MP, we see a total indifference toward preaching of True, undamaged Orthodoxy, the total loss of understanding that Roman Catholicism as a terrible heresy, yet on the other hand, he is not at all concerned about the loss of millions of souls who were once Orthodox and their fate in eternity, but only with the church buildings in Ukraine and Catholic propaganda in Russia.

## **A COURSE ON ISLAM IN A CALIFORNIA MIDDLE SCHOOL**

A newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of January 1<sup>st</sup> has reported that on one of the middle schools in California Islam is being taught.

This created a controversy. There are student's parents who lament that little time is devoted to the study of various religions. However, on the other hand, quite a few insist that the state should be separate from the church and no religious instructions be offered.

The controversial course was introduced in a second district near Oakland at the Excelsior School. Some 125 seventh grade students were told to imagine that they are fighting for Islam. They read verses from the Koran, studied Islamic



proverbs and were dressed up in the Muslim robes. It was explained to the students that "From the beginning, you and your classmates will become Muslims... Dressing as a Muslim and trying to be involved will increase your learning and enjoyment".

The superintendent of the school, Peggy Green, told the newspaper that her schools are not promoting this faith, but solely teaching about Islam. She also said, that the students could get extra credit if they dressed up as Muslims. Ken Connor, president of the Washington based Family Research Council said the classes are quite unfair.

"This reflects a terrible double standard. Anything that smacks of Christianity is systematically excluded in the classroom, but everything like Wicca to Islam is welcomed".

A newspaper "Christian News" of January 28<sup>th</sup> published a 4 page long article with details about this program. It also made many quotations from the Koran and other Muslim literature to be studied by the Christian students. They are obliged to learn not only the biography of Mohamed (certainly written in the most favorable tones), but also learn by heart a number of prayers "in the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful" chant "Praise to Allah, Lord of Creation" and a number of paragraphs from the Koran. In the program there are included 20 Islamic proverbs, the Five Pillars of Faith and information about 10 Muslim prophets!

The teacher in one of the California schools found out about this program from her son who is a student in the school where she is teaching. The woman who was quite rightly disgusted said: "Can you imagine the barrage of lawsuits and problems we would have from the ACLU if Christianity were taught in the public schools and if we tried to teach about the contributions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the Apostle Paul? But when it comes to furthering the Islamic religion in the public schools, there is not one word from the ACLU, People For The American Way or anybody else. This is hypocrisy".

Students were asked what they think of the program. They said "it is fun", this is "a beautiful culture" and "jihad is like the computer video games".

Peggy Green did not answer any telephone calls!

The American Center for Law and Justice has sent a letter to the Byron Union School District insisting that school officials allow students to opt out of the course on Islam.

#### **FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH THE LAST 'SECRETARY OF RELIGION' IN THE SOVIET UNION**

The newspaper "New News" published in Russia on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2001 had an interview with the former chief of the Council for Religious Affairs, Constantine Kharchev. The newspaper's reporter Eugene Komarov recorded the interview. Kharchev, a convinced Communist even now, headed this criminal organization in the USSR from 1984 to 1989. The newspaper printed an amusing photograph: Kharchev in a very unsightly position sits squatted on some elevated ground and before him stand: Archpriest Victor Potapov and his wife.

The interview, titled "The Church repeats mistakes of KPSS" (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), clears up quite a few previously unknown matters.

Some time ago, there was general surprise when it became known that Kharchev was dismissed and replaced by Khristorodnov. Now we learn the reason for it. Kharchev was commissioned to organize a "perestroika" in the religious field. He started to open churches and this created immediate problems for him with the local authorities and the KGB, who insisted that he should not "hurry" in this matter. At the same time, the government and the MP itself planned, according to words of Metropolitan Juvenally, to celebrate the millennium of Christianity in Russia as a "little family affair", but it turned out to be a pan-Orthodox celebration with invitations to the Eastern Patriarchs. The Communists couldn't forgive Kharchev for this and he was quickly dismissed from his position.

Komarov in his article writes that "In the end, Kharchev became famous in a unusual way: *the members of the Synod of Bishops of the ROC immediately sensed the negative mood of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and slandered Kharchev and went... to the Politburo! (This is unique in the history of the Church)*".

Kharchev was removed, but all the hierarchs who a decade ago went to the atheists to complain about too many opened churches are still today the leading personalities within the Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate!

Kharchev was asked why he, a member of Communist Party of long standing, all of a sudden decided to reopen churches and celebrate the millennium of Russia's Christianity. He replied: We were simply returning to Lenin's norms of life. You remember yourself that "perestroika" started with this slogan. Also, our constitution says that the faithful do have rights. So we started to do what was written".

Also interesting are other Kharchev opinions about the contemporary MP. After pointing out that it never objected to the "pilfering of the state," he explained that "it sanctified all of this and for it received her portion. For everybody it is much easier to fish in murky waters. In the sick society there can never be a healthy Church: those who live in the same apartment have the same illnesses".

From the interview we also find out that when Patriarch Pimen was dying, "there was the very same struggle as there is for the presidency, with all sorts of dirty techniques... Patriarch Pimen for a year tried to persuade me to agree to dismissal of the administrator of the MP affairs of that time from his post". That was the now Patriarch Alexis Ridiger.

To the question what were the motives for such a request, Kharchev laconically answered: "let us not reveal the secrets of confession". One must realize he very well understands what would threaten him from "former" KGB agents if he were to reveal this secret in contemporary "democratic" Russia!

To say that the Council for Religious Affairs didn't "interfere with dogmas of the faith" certainly does not correspond to the truth. It was due to insistence of this Council that the Russian Church was forced to join in 1961 the WCC. At the same time, it is common knowledge that every bishop was appointed in coordination with wishes of this Council.

The closing of the Council for Religious Affairs Kharchev very logically explains as a desire of the MP and various political "clans" to avoid any kind of financial control over the millions of dollars which are manipulated by the MP and those "clans".

As Kharchev explains, "this was a controlling organ which didn't permit stealing".

The conclusions by Kharchev, who states that he is a believing Orthodox person, but also a person who has one love in a lifetime, in this case the Communist Party – leads to very sad thoughts about the irreversible spiritual death of the Moscow Patriarchate.

## THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT AND THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The Roman Catholic confession which all over the world in the persons of her nuncios has one of the most professionally developed spy networks, long ago attracted the attention of the Soviet Government and then of the Russian Federation. Even Gorbachev and Yeltsin invited the Pope to come to Russia. At present, the same invitation, and it seems with more persistence, comes from President Putin, who is running out of compliments about the head of the Catholics.

After his recent visit to Poland, Putin gave an extended interview to the reporter of newspaper "Gazeta Wyborcza," which in part was published in January 2002 in the "Ecumenical News International." Putin said that he has "immense respect" for the personality of the Pope and expressed a hope that his arrival to Russia would happen during his term as President. As Putin said, "there are no problems in the ties between Russia and Vatican, and I am ready at any time to invite the Pope". But at the same time, according to the President, "the Pope himself feels that if he is to go to Moscow, it has to be a full value visit with full value relationship with the Russian Orthodox Church.... but unfortunately it is not up to me. I can only help and encourage full relations between the churches – and I can give assurances that I am hastening in this direction... But this is one instance in which less should be said and more should be done, showing tact and patience" (Emphasis by "Ch.N").

Asked if he believes he might "welcome the Polish Pope" during his presidency, Putin answered positively and declared that "it even brings forth some feelings of pride".

There was wide reaction in the media in Russia, especially on the Internet, to his coming to Russia.

Vatican never made it a secret that its dream is to receive an invitation to Russia and from the Moscow Patriarchate.

But, as usual, it is playing the habitual double-faced game. On one side, according to "NTVRU/Religion and Society," it has "approved the President's position regarding relations of the ROC and the Vatican" and considers it to be "correct and dignified" – and on the other, is willing to agree on arrival of this Catholic only after resolving previous conditions. Alexis Ridiger said just recently that the arrival of the Pope "at present is impossible, because there is religious expansion going on in Russian territory". He also noted that if under present circumstances the Pope nevertheless would come to Russia "my meeting with him will not take place".

The deputy president of the Department for Foreign Relations of the MP, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin said that "the President of Russia understands that one can not separate a visit of the Pope as head of state from a visit as head of the Roman Catholic Church, because the state of the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church are inseparable. And the visit of the Pope as the head of the church has to be accompanied by contacts with ecclesiastical channels. Then Archpriest Chaplin said that "contact of the ROC with the Roman Pope on high level is possible only in the event that the problems which stand between the two churches would be regulated. We did not create these problems".

There are serious speculations that this flirting of Putin with the Catholics and the displeasure with it of Alexis Ridiger led to a certain conflict between the two main leaders in Russia. According to the newspaper "Commerzant" of January 9<sup>th</sup>, for the first time in several years Putin did not attend the patriarchal Christmas service, nor did the mayor of Moscow, Luzhkov. The first went for Christmas to Vladimir, and the other spent Christmas on Cyprus. Putin also missed two official events that he used to regularly attend.

It is obvious that Tadeusz Kondrasiewicz, the senior of the 4 Catholic bishops over 600 thousand Catholics in Russia, also dreams of meeting the Pope in Moscow!

### "CHEAP HONOR" – WHAT IS IT?

(An open letter from the Chancery of the Suzdal Diocesan Administration of the ROAC to the editorial office of the newspaper "Prizyv" in answer to an article published in that paper on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001)

A pretty face at a bad play? Or one's own honor seriously valued a bit more? Such thoughts come to mind when reading a recent article in the newspaper "Prizyv" of November 30<sup>th</sup>, # 222. Let's follow it.

"Cheap honor" is an article by an anonymous correspondent of the above newspaper and is addressed to a certain Marina Komov who asked the editors if it is true that Metropolitan Valentin has won the court case in defense of his reputation and dignity against the newspaper.



Marina Komov, who if we are to believe the "Prizyv" paper resides in Suzdal, is to be commended for her interest in this matter. The residents of Suzdal, the parents of Vanya Saveliev, Roma Kolesnikov, Kolya Filippov and 96 local residents, who wrote, signed and delivered to the newspaper "Prizyv's" editorial office their appeal were not this lucky.

The Editor in Chief Buyanov, who during office hours was busy with his private affairs, did not receive the delegation, but other staff members of the newspaper did. "What compromising material against Valentin have you brought? Hand it over right away". This was what the dumb struck people heard. They did not expect such cynicism. "No, we came with a letter in defense of Metropolitan Valentin with the request that you publish it". "We are not going to publish it," declared Raschupkin a staff member of the newspaper. The delegation requested to be received by the Editor in Chief in order not to waste their meager funds on useless trips to Vladimir. "The Editor in Chief is very busy" was the answer.

The defendants got a flat refusal in the editorial office of the newspaper "Prizyv". From an interview broadcast by the TV 6 Channel M. Buyanov we learn that he met only with the "former circle around the Metropolitan, which in this case opposes Mr. Rousantsov". The correspondent Raschupkin revealed in the same program, in which he juggled the facts, that some children's parents came to the office who later denied they ever had any "claims against Rousantsov". We assure you that no one ever wrote any denials either to the prosecutor or to any other official agencies. This is why the "office of journalist investigations" never mentioned a single first or last name.

The Vladimir city prosecutor's office, which often complains about lack of funds to fight criminals, yet initiates a suit not prompted by the complaints of victims' parents, but by the appeal of the offended Osetrov who has absolutely no relationship with any of the supposed "victims". Andrew A. Osetrov, who was defrocked and deposed from an honorable position in the Russian Orthodox Church, who imagined himself a struggler and defender [for the Faith], who runs around with a video camera and arranges "compromising tapes" is as dangerous to society as any regular criminal. But such types are actually necessary for Vladimir's prosecutor and the editors of "Prizyv." What for? Above all in order to discredit Metropolitan Valentin as Head of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

At the Stalinist period and the following years any one who left the official Soviet Patriarchate would be accused of treason against the homeland, espionage, and slander of the Soviet government. The payment for this would have been the cruelest of punishments.

But times have changed. In today's conditions of freedom to accuse someone of espionage and treachery against the homeland is not so easy. But to make short work of Metropolitan Valentin, who leads an irreconcilable fight against Communist ideology, against the ideology of the Moscow Patriarchate, is very desirable.

Meanwhile, the Metropolitan is an honorary citizen of old Suzdal [nearly a millennium old, "Ch. N."], the author of works on the history of theology and a history of Suzdal. Not with state funds, but with his own money and the donations of faithful living not only in the homeland, but also from abroad, he restored in Suzdal alone 11 half-ruined churches desecrated by the Communist ideologues. He has built two new churches, established in Suzdal a nursing convent dedicated to St. John of Shanghai with a church. Established a convent dedicated to The Laying of the Virgin's Garment with a church. Built the Synod house and established in it a monastery dedicated to the New Martyrs and Confessors in Russia with two churches. Built a chapel on the place where once stood two churches destroyed by the Communists: one to the Mother of God and another of St. Barbara.

A process to discredit Metropolitan Valentin has started in Suzdal. Those who are interested in it are:

1. The head of regional administration and his circle who feel uncomfortable when they hear of an independent Church
2. The Moscow Patriarchate, which is weary of the schism and
3. The "special services" (a sort of FBI) with which the Metropolitan refused to cooperate and who now gave to the newspaper "Prizyv" and to Osetrov a case, Point 52, which they have themselves fabricated against him in 1988 and which they themselves have closed.

At that time Archimandrite Valentin had close relations with such writers and so-called dissidents as Henrich Buell, Leo Kopelev, Boris Burger and others that made the authorities keep an eye on Archimandrite Valentin. And it is only due to perestroika that he was saved from the inevitable punishment of the Communists.

The newspaper's council of "bureau of journalist investigators" rushed to slander the children's parents who dared to raise their voices in defense of Metropolitan Valentin, insisting that they have "for a shopping bag of humanitarian assistance" refused to defend their victimized children. There are good reasons to believe that the "Prizyv" staff gets for their articles not packages of humanitarian assistance, but some denominations with water marks, figures and zeroes, since they themselves admitted that they had to increase their newspaper's print run as a result of their "truthful" articles about Metropolitan Valentin.

Metropolitan Valentin is an extraordinary personality. And no matter how they try to smear his name with dirt, he remains and will remain the most authoritative clergyman in the homeland as well as in foreign countries.