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CHRIST IS RISEN!

THE EDITORS OF *CHURCH NEWS* SINCERELY GREET ALL OUR READERS WITH THE COMING
OF THE JOYFUL DAYS OF HOLY PASCHA
AND EXTEND TO THEM ALL THE WISH THAT THEY MAY GREET THESE DAYS
WITH SPIRITUAL REJOICING AND GOOD HEALTH.

TO ALL OUR READERS WHO HAVE SENT US GREETINGS UPON THIS FEAST OF FEASTS
WE ARE EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR THEIR CONCERN AND REPLY TO THEM WITH THE RESPONSE:
TRULY HE IS RISEN!

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THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE POPE
THE PRIMATE OF THE "ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA" METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS RETIRES

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PASCHAL EPISTLE

**Of the Most Reverend VALENTIN, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir,
The First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church to the God-loving flock of the Russian Orthodox Church**

“Truly sacred and supremely festive is this saving night, radiant with light, the forerunner of the bright beaming Day of the Resurrection, whereon the Timeless Light in bodily form shone from the grave for all”.

(Troparion of the 7th Ode of the Paschal Canon)

Beloved in the Risen Christ Archpastors, honored Fathers, dear Brothers and Sisters!

On the day of the Bright Resurrection of Christ, unearthly joy fills again the heart of every Christian. It becomes understandable to us now what feelings, as described in the Holy Gospel, the Holy Apostles experienced during the great and bright night almost 2,000 years ago. Today all our being, and the entire universe, are full of joy, as Christ has destroyed death and given us eternal life! In order to keep and increase the promise of eternal life, to inherit the Heavenly Kingdom, and always to be with the Lord, we need to draw strength from the Holy Church. St. Theophilus of Alexandria said that for sailors God has given islands as place of refuge; and for the world that lies in sin God has granted us the holy Church where the teaching of the truth is preserved.

To our regret, some of our fellow-countrymen still share the strange belief in the anarchism of the totalitarian, godless, Communist regime. They think that Christians are simply those who have received holy Baptism; that holy Baptism is sufficient to call one a Christian. Even from the ambo we may hear sermons about the “Orthodox by baptism” or “by birth”, and not by belief, not by life. The majority of our countrymen were baptized in infancy; but very few of them celebrate the saving salutary feasts, keep the fasts, or sincerely seek to follow God’s commandments. Such people are very neglectful towards Church life, falsely thinking that it consists only of some sort of external “folk” rites. They consider most important for our salvation the “faith one keeps in his soul” and believe that faith is a belief in something vague, described in pseudo-philosophical terms such as “the highest intellectual reason” -- which are nothing but attempts to hide their reluctance to live according to the Holy Gospel; nothing but an endeavor to adopt the faith to their sinful weaknesses, delusions and ignorance. The Gospel calls us to completely change our way of life to leave the “dead” of this life and entirely follow the Risen Christ. And this is not an abstract “Higher Intellect”, but the living Person of the God-man: He is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”.

Christ is the Head of the Church militant on earth and triumphant in Heaven, so the first indication of our following the Risen Christ is a most active participation in Church life. There is nothing minor, secondary or shallow in the Church. Its every action has a deeper, higher meaning, established either by Christ Himself or through His saints, through which we spiritually cleanse ourselves by fleeing from the sinful life toward likeness to God, so that we become God-bearers.

The most-blessed Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), in accordance with the ancient teachers of the Church, has noted the exceptional joy that the faithful soul senses during the Holy Paschal night, calling it a foretaste of the eternal, brightest joy that will be the foundation of the heavenly felicity of Paradise. In the Paschal Canon that we have just heard, the Holy Church clearly calls upon us to “Partake of Thee fully in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom”. In the last troparia of the Paschal Canon, we are mysteriously united to the New Pascha, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. His heavenly Kingdom, that is opened to us by the Resurrection Christ and the Communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Christ, which is the most evident and obvious way of our partaking of eternal joy of living with God and in God. “O great and most sacred Pascha, Christ, O Wisdom and Word and Power of God! Grant that we partake of Thee fully in the unwaning day of Thy Kingdom.”

May our joy in the risen Christ multiply, because the Conqueror of Death has cleansed His people from sin, has released us from the ancient curse and has given us the source of Heavenly blessing and meaning with zeal for our life in the earthly valley so full of lamentation.

We Christians announce to the world that still lies in evil and is ruled by sin, the Blessed News. “Hell rules but not eternally over the human race,” exclaims the hymnody of Great Saturday. Due to our weakness and spiritual indifference, we cannot share the happiness of the Resurrection with all the people on earth, and many still have not realized the blessing of faith in Christ the Lord. That is why there is so much sadness and grief in this world; that is why all our earthly existence is so tragic and full of contradiction in the moral, social, political and economic spheres. Faith in the Risen Christ, joy because of the Holy Gospel’s announcement, and the promise of eternal life in Christ remove all these contradictions. But the world does not know this Faith, does not share this joy, and does not hear God’s promise. It does not know, share, or hear, because we have not brought this news to the world. We Christians cannot look calmly and indifferently at how sad now is the world. Paschal joy must become a motivation toward the Gospel preaching and must awaken everyone of us to witness to Christ’s Resurrection before those close to us and those distant, calling them to the salutary gates of the Church of the Living God.

Beloved in the Risen Christ, co-Brothers, Archpastors, all-honored Fathers, honored Monastics, I especially greet you, my zealous co-servants and co-supplicators, and again heartily congratulate you on the all-joyous feast of Christ’s Pascha! Christ Is Risen! Let not the light that has dawned in your soul be darkened, for it is released from Hades and sin by the Resurrection! Christ is with you forever! The Church and every one of us lives by the joy of the Resurrection, and not only on the bright dawn of the Paschal Day itself. Our entire life in the Church is permeated with Pascha, so that the joy of the Resurrection should never fade in us, whatever the external circumstances.

"I am with you through all the days until the end of the age," (Mt. 28:20) said the Lord. Always remember this. Neither loose nor diminish the joy that every one of us feels when one knows with all one's heart that God is here. And most importantly: stay with God yourself; be worthy of His presence; and He, always truthful, shall never leave you. He will make you co-heirs of His felicity, giving you all He has. "Your joy can never be taken away from you" is another of God's promises, which we must remember through all the hardship of earthly living. Our true and unhypocritical joy in Christ, our true love for one another and all people, are the best witnesses of the truthfulness of our Faith and our Church. If we have no such foundation, then hundreds of volumes of works in theology and canon law will remain useless.

The enemy of our salvation tries to take away our Paschal joy, to introduce arguments and quarrels, to break up our Christian community, using our weakness and human mistakes. Persecutions that have fallen with renewed force upon our Church compel us to increase our prayers to the Risen Christ, asking for His mercy and protection, patience and humility to do His will. We must pray more often: "Let Thy will, O Lord, be done in me, the sinful, for Thou art blessed into the ages of ages!"

I call upon you the blessing of the Risen Christ and heartily wish you to keep undamaged the Orthodox Faith and unbreakable unity with the True Church in Christ our Lord unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Christ Is Risen Indeed!

Asking for your holy prayers, + Valentin, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir.
Christ's Pascha 2002, Suzdal

METROPOITAN VALENTIN RETURNS FROM MOSCOW HOSPITAL TO SUZDAL

After almost a month long stay in one of the Moscow hospitals, the First Hierarch of the Russian Autonomous Church, Metropolitan Valentin, finally was well enough to be able to return home. On the feast of Annunciation he was able to serve the vigil service and the Divine Liturgy in the Moscow St. Nicholas the Tsar Martyr Church on the Golovine Cemetery and walk with the procession around the church, and afterwards he was hosted by the rector of the church, Fr. Michael Ardov.

Unfortunately, the reasons for his admission to the hospital are still far from being resolved and the veiled attack against him by the Moscow Patriarchate is in no way any weaker. So, according to a report by the agency Vertograd.Razsylka # 247 of April 23rd, in mid-May the court hearings are scheduled to continue against the Metropolitan. Meanwhile, Eugene Kutsik, who several times offered to the Metropolitan his apologies for his slander and who in presence of witnesses complained to Archbishop Theodore that again he was offered 500 rubles for slander, now, under pressure of the "authorities" agreed again to become a false witness. According to Vertograd, "the whereabouts of E. Kutsik is not known, and his visits to Suzdal, are under the watchful eyes of two well-built men". Another reports says that under "pedagogical pressure" another "victim" Andrew Panov (a boyfriend of one of Osetrov's daughters) also agreed to become a witness.

The former protodeacon, Dimitry Krasovsky – just recently married, bought an apartment in Moscow and at the same time, continues to build a brick house in Suzdal. A short time ago, he was renting a basement space in a small house and complained in writing that his "apartment" does not even have running water! Also, Krasovsky is officially known as "an unregistered unemployed".

Olga Morozova, a former tonsured nun Sophia, now wears pants, has a very short hair cut and is helping Osetrov with the household, since his wife Helen Shipounova has moved to Moscow and Osetrov has 11 children of various ages. She also has enough funds to purchase a house.

Ms. Anikina, who protested in court the election to a third term of the Metropolitan on the City Council and has lost this case (he won the election by several votes), now is again appealing it and demands that the case be reviewed. She accused the Metropolitan of bribing the voters by distributing humanitarian aid among needy parishioners, which he has done for a number of years. This "case" is scheduled to be heard for the second time on May 30th.

Andrew Osetrov, ordained by Bishop Valentin, who a year ago was defrocked by him for creating a revolt against the hierarchy, on Great Thursday was accepted by the Moscow Patriarchate against which he fought so vigorously and well just a decade ago! We have information that he was "ordained" by Archbishop Eulogy. The former Protodeacon Dimitry Krasovsky has also joined the MP. Osetrov was rector of the parish in Kideksha (a historic site where the saintly brothers Boris and Gleb held a military conference). This church was handed over to the Suzdal diocese and Metropolitan Valentin thinking that the 10 to 15 parishioners would not be able to restore the church from its ruins, yet they did restore it. Now, most certainly, the church will be sized by the MP, although not all the parishioners agreed to it when Osetrov announced he was joining the MP.

Due to these events Osetrov cancelled all Holy Week services!

According to information from Vertograd # 251 of May 2nd, on Holy Wednesday the Osetrov adherents broke the windows in the Synod building. Big cobblestones were thrown through the windows of Vladyka's bedroom and one of the stones and glass splinters fell next to his bed. Luckily, the Metropolitan was not hurt. When this crime was reported to the local authorities, they suggested the information be sent by mail! The Osetrov's group does not hide the fact that the next target is Archbishop Theodore and Archimandrite Irinarch. They openly hope that because of this persecution the Metropolitan will flee to the Caucasus, he will have a heart attack, or will be found guilty as a criminal.

It is very doubtful that they can calm down and, in any case, the responsibility for all these outrageous crimes and physical attacks (one of the cathedral's altar boys was beaten up and taken to a hospital) will now rest with the Moscow Patriarchate, which is represented by the Osetrov group. So far, the Moscow Patriarchate has pretended that she is just observing the events in Suzdal, and has no immediate interest in them.

It is quite obvious that the persons interested in compromising the First Hierarch of the Russian Autonomous Church will spare no funds and efforts in the effort to get rid of him by any means. There are reasons to assert that Osetrov's group was getting financial support from such organizations as "The Union of Patriotic Youth", "the Struggling Art" and even "The Society of Chechen Veterans"! Undoubtedly, behind these smoke screens stands the Moscow Patriarchate who is the only interested party in this case.

At the same time, there is a court case in Suzdal and Vladimir, initiated by Metropolitan Valentin, against the newspaper 'Prizyv' which on several occasions published crude slanders against him.

INJURY OF ARCHBISHOP ALIPY, DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF METROPOLITAN LAURUS

On April 19th, Archbishop Alipy was cutting a dry branch from a tree and fell off a ladder. His injury to the spine is quite serious. He was operated on and, according to the latest information, the Archbishop's legs are paralyzed. At present it is not clear if he will be able to walk.

The next Deputy of the First Hierarch of the ROCOR, according to seniority, is Archbishop Mark. A not so promising prospect for the Church Abroad, especially, considering that Metropolitan Laurus is in poor health and had several operations in the sinus era.

AN EXTENDED DIOCESAN MEETING IN VORONEZH

From Vertograd in their Razsylka #'s 241 & 245, we find out about a meeting in Voronezh that had sessions on April 17-18 and was presided over by Archbishop Lazarus of Odessa-Tambov with Bishop Benjamin of Tchernomorsk-Kuban. 48 clergymen from these dioceses participated in this meeting. Agathangel, Bishop of Crimea and Simferopol, is not mentioned in this report. Most probably, he has taken a "wait and see position", because there is no information that he has left the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Laurus; however, he is not in accord with Archbishop Lazarus and Benjamin regarding the newly established jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly!

As Vertograd reports, shortly before the opening of this conference Archbishop Lazarus received a letter from Metropolitan Vitaly who blessed the hierarchs in Russia to "consecrate new Bishops" and even more – "to create its own Synod of Bishops that would be in agreement with our Synod of Bishops".

After deliberations about the last decisions and their consequences of the ROCOR's (L) Council of Bishops in 2001, the meeting resolved that "this is already another Church, spiritually related to the apostatized Moscow Patriarchate, the American Metropolia and similar creations. There is no way to remain in prayerful, eucharistic communion with the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus or be under canonical obedience to him".

As is well known, due to the outrageous actions of the ROCOR Synod toward Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin (groundless ordering into retirement) they, under the chairmanship of Archbishop Lazarus, have created a Provisional Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration.

At the second session of the Council in Lesna in 1994, an effort was made to restore the unity of ROCOR with the hierarchs in Russia. They, for the sake of peace, agreed to end the Provisional Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration and the Council of Bishops on November 13/26th 1994 in point 3 decreed that "the Russian hierarchs are obliged to organize a Hierarchal Council to resolve local matters. And one of the Russian hierarchs is to be a member of the Synod of Bishops". The last point was never realized!

However, the very first independent hierarchical meeting in Russia evoked a strong displeasure on the part of the Synod and so Archbishop Lazarus and Bishop Valentin were immediately suspended. Archbishop Lazarus panicked at that and in May of 1955 petitioned the Synod to lift its suspension; he parted from Bishop Valentin, who did not recognize as valid these suspensions, done without any investigation and court hearing.

All these resolutions, without any hesitation or submission of a "special opinion" were signed by Metropolitan Vitaly, who now, 8 years later, is blessing what he previously disapproved of and is doing what was suggested to him by Bishop Gregory on many occasions!

The Conference has sent to Archbishop Barnabas an epistle in which he is reminded of his outrageous violations of the canons committed in 1992-1993 and which he continues to commit. In particular, "we have in mind the Petersburg Archimandrite Alexis (Makrinov) and his followers, for whom Bishop Barnabas had retained the self-bestowed titles of 'Administrator of the Special Region' and 'Confessor of the Spiritual Region.' After that Bishop Barnabas accepted persons legally defrocked by the Councils of Bishops in the 1990's (while the motives for the defrocking were such, like a second marriage, and so obvious that in no way they can be represented as the 'result of canonical errors') as well as clerics of the ROAC, who were defrocked by the Synod of Bishops. All these uncanonical acts were committed by Archbishop Barnabas, just as in the beginning of the 1990's 'without any consultations with the Russian Bishops and without a review by an ecclesiastical court of the facts of the matter' and they were accepted 'not as penitents, but as having governing positions'. Not limiting himself to these outrageous acts, Archbishop Barnabas has 'transferred' into his

jurisdiction some clergy of the Odessa-Tambov diocese, who had no release documents from their ruling bishops but, rather, they were distributing materials to compromise him.”

At the same time, the Conference sent to Metropolitan Vitaly a letter affirming their total loyalty to him.

The participants of the Voronezh meeting have characterized the deeds of Archbishop Barnabas as “a stab in the back of his brethren”. In connection with all this, the meeting sent a letter to Archbishop Barnabas, which was published by Vertograd, only partially, but what was published was written in very civilized tone. However, the same Vertograd has published the full text of a rather rude response from Archbishop Barnabas, dated 6/19th of April, 2002:

“This is a swindle. Because there are reasons to believe, that the letter to Vl. Lazarus, signed by Metropolitan Vitaly, and which became basis for all the acts of the Voronezh Conference, is a falsehood. If it is not so, than someone has in a disgraceful manner induced the Metropolitan to agree to the documents offered to him and which have no power regarding matters of a church wide character.

“This is a disgrace. Because Their Graces Lazarus and Benjamin have agreed to such a swindle and have involved in it a whole number of clergy and lay people, when they founded a new ecclesiastical organization, while they have addressed Metropolitan Vitaly with a hypocritical letter denouncing me.

This moral lawlessness is concluded with the hypocritical activity of the ‘Russian’ Hierarchs, induced to such an adventure by their circle, to which was hurriedly added the brothers Alferovs, whose traces like a red thread run through the acts of this Conference.

The legal Russian Orthodox Church which has suffered so much from all sorts of enemies, now in this manner enters into a new period of her history, when the Lazarus’ schism, which we had foreseen, will try to completely wipe her off the face of the world, but will be able only to cleanse her from the foreign elements who seek their own ends.

With all faithfulness to the true canonical ROCOR and her Head, His Eminence the Metropolitan Vitaly, who has appointed me to be his Deputy in case of emergency, I appeal to all the sincere members of the ROCOR and those who are faithful to her spirit of confessing true Orthodoxy and love of Russia, to follow us on the path we have laid out, when on the day of November 5th, 2001, when we performed the first consecration and our hopes again started to rise to the Almighty”.

From the Editors:

Bishop Barnabas is quite correct when he calls the Russian Orthodox Church “the much-suffering”. However, even after all these years, he has not realized that he is the main and only cause of these present sufferings of the Russian Church. All the Marks, Lauruses, Hilarions, Evtikhys and others are really nothing but the result of his outrageous activities, which only have been put to use by the real and hardly imaginary enemies of the Church.

His anger about the slight autonomy of Bishop Lazarus is the result of no other motive but his personal lust for power and honor. One has just to look at the minutes of the Council of Bishops in 1993, # 5 where it is clear that he, without any reason, sharply criticizes ALL the Russian Hierarchs and pleads with the Council to let him alone administer ALL the parishes in Russia!

Regarding the letter of Metropolitan Vitaly to Archbishop Lazarus, it is no secret to anybody (except to those who can profit from it) that due to senility, he indeed gladly signs any document (even ones which would contradict one another he himself has signed the day before) – if at any given moment he trusts the person who asks for his signature.

And, generally speaking, this whole story proves again that Archbishop Barnabas cannot discontinue of his damaging and sad role of an adventurer!

ARCHBISHOP BARNABAS CALLS A HALT TO “LAZARUS SCHISM”

After reporting on the extended Voronezh diocesan conference, Vertograd.Razsylka #249 of April 29th published information about the consequences of a rude response by Bishop Barnabas regarding the letter of Metropolitan Vitaly to Archbishop Lazarus in which the former gave him permission to perform episcopal ordinations and to create an independent Synod.

In accordance with this, Bishop Benjamin asked Metropolitan Vitaly: “Should we perform the already scheduled episcopal consecration or should we refrain from it until the Council of Bishops decides in accordance with the 34th Apostolic Canon?” He also reported that Archbishop Lazarus has 3 candidates for ordination and scheduled to be performed during Bright Week.

Metropolitan Vitaly replied that this is a matter “of extreme importance and requires a conciliar decision”. The usual practice of Metropolitan Vitaly has been not only to resolve on his own matters which were to be decided by the Synod of Bishops, but he even used to change Synod’s decisions, as was noted on numerous occasions in writing by the late Bishop Gregory.

Meanwhile, on April 20th there was a bishops’ conference in Mansonville, chaired by Metropolitan Vitaly and in presence of Bishops Sergius and Vladimir, as well as priests Victor Melekhov, Joseph Sunderland, Spyridon Schneider and Michael Martsinovsky.

The conference mildly reprimanded, one must say, the Metropolitan and decreed that “despite the fact that Metropolitan Vitaly gave his own personal permission, the decision to create a church administration in Russia is in the jurisdiction of the Council of Bishops. Prior to and without a conciliar decision, as per 34th Apostolic Canon, in other words, due to its

uncanonicity, there can be no separate administration in Russia. Therefore, also episcopal ordinations may be performed only after a decision by the ROCOR's Council of Bishops".

It seems that the Hierarchs Abroad stubbornly and persistently oppose the possibility of building up ecclesiastical life in Russia with accordance with the decision of Patriarch Tikhon, the Holy Synod and the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council, dated on November 7/20th, 1920 # 362!

May the Lord grant, while it is still not too late, that the Hierarchs in Russia understand and value the real importance of this historic Patriarchal regulation, and stop participating in dubious escapades, but start a new life according to this wise Patriarchal advice and join the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church!

ABOUT THE PASTORAL CONFERENCE OF EASTERN-AMERICAN CLERGY OF THE ROCOR (L)

According to the magazine Pravoslavnaya Rus #7, from March 14/27th to 16th/29th there was a pastoral conference of the ROCOR jurisdiction of Metropolitan Laurus' Eastern-American diocesan clergy in Washington, DC. The conference was opened by a speech by the Metropolitan. The Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel, was also present who made a report about the present situation of the Church Abroad after the Council of 2001. He also responded to numerous questions which were put by the participants. This conference accepted a resolution, which no longer surprises anyone, which we publish in a slightly abridged version and in our translation.

"We, the clergymen gathered in the capital city of Washington, in the Church of St. John the Baptist, heard the speech of our father, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, the First Hierarch of the ROCOR, who called us to worthily prepare ourselves for the sacraments and communion of the All-pure Body and Blood of our Chief-Pastor, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The conference listened to the report of Archpriest Victor Potapov about the conference in Hungary in October of last year, which was the first conference dedicated to the history of the Russian Church during the tragic period of 1917-1933, when the disconnection of part of the Russian Church occurred.

The participants of the Washington conference expressed a desire for the urgently necessary development of sincere dialogue between our committee regarding the unity of the Russian Church with the Moscow Patriarchate, in order to clarify the historic truth about the Russian Orthodox Church and to assert ecclesiology. (Underlined by "Ch. N.")

We are saddened by the continued participation of the MP hierarchs in the ecumenical movement, especially in the so-called activities of the World Council of Churches.

We are filled with the resolution to follow the original path, indicated to us by the ROCOR's Councils of Bishops and the behests of our former First Hierarchs and such pillars as St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco and Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko)...."

There is no doubt that none of the former First Hierarchs of the ROCOR, and especially Metropolitan Philaret, would ever have consented to the "necessary development of sincere dialogue" with the Moscow Patriarchate. The members of this conference have definitely "forgotten" that up to the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly the Church Abroad never recognized as legal any of the Moscow Patriarchs but considered all their resolutions and decrees to be invalid and totally ignored them.

The fact that such a declaration by the conference has taken place under the presidency of the new Metropolitan Laurus and in the presence of the Secretary to the Synod of Bishop – despite their assertions of the opposite – does officially testify to the change of the entire policy of the Church Abroad.

ANOTHER PASTORAL CONFERENCE

The very same irreplaceable Vertograd gives details of the pastoral diocesan conference which took place on March 26th-27th in Ishima, under the chairmanship of Bishop Yevtikhy, the only hierarch in Russia who has remained faithful to Metropolitan Laurus.

When making his report Bishop Yevtikhy pointed out that "for several years, the valuable time of pastoral conferences has been wasted on discussions about the general situation of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad". He affirmed that the ROCOR position remains that of separation from the MP and other ecumenist Churches. While stressing the necessity of being primarily occupied with the spiritual life and pastoral ministry, Bishop Yevtikhy also made an interesting and more precise definition. According to him and the text of Vertograd, "the so-called discussion about the general situation of the ROCOR should be put to an end, since it disturbs and even makes impossible the discussion of problems connected with the consideration and resolution of problems connected with achieving the aims and tasks which confront the Diocese and her parishes. It is important to clearly realize that these "discussions" in particular, are the basic tools in the fight against the ROCOR. A while ago the Catacomb Church was annihilated in very same manner. At that time, seeds of mistrust and suspicion toward each other were sown among catacomb members that naturally led to major separations, divisions and, finally, the degeneration of parishes into sects with different policies.... Now, following the same scenario, an effort is being made to annihilate the ROCOR.... Those priests and parishes that have expressed distrust of the diocesan administration have severed their unity with the Church and their organizational status is unclear, but they are no longer a part of the diocese. The return of the departed clergymen and parishes will be considered in the same manner as the approach of the clergy and lay people from the Moscow Patriarchate, 'Valentinians' and others".

Bishop Yevtikhy by rote repeats the theory of Archbishop Mark and his followers: pray, have unlimited trust in your bishops and clergy and, by all means, do not reason independently!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS...

A report to the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR by Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) on September 17/30th, 1990

I have ordered a sufficient number of recently published booklets by publishing house of "OMEGA" for the information of the President of the Synod of Bishops and its members regarding plans to create the "New Age" World. The plan for the rule of Antichrist is very important for us. Very attentively following events, not only in the main newspapers, but also in Jewish and special publications, as well as from the Vatican, I have come to the conclusion that the above-mentioned plan has progressed greatly. It is not without reason that recent Jewish publications interpret the events happening in the Arabic countries as the beginning of Armageddon, and the Jerusalem Church at present is persecuted as never before.

The unexpected "perestroika" in Russia and in the West is not an accident. It is a sign that the pace of building the "New Age", that is, the kingdom of Antichrist, has everywhere been hastened. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility of unexpected delays for the builders, which in a way may depend also on us, since much depends upon the state of the Russian People.

In connection with this, should not we speed up the pace of our activities?

In the territory of Russia, from a posture of a defensive war against atheism we have gone to the offensive. At present, the tactics of the KGB, due to circumstances, have to change. They cannot always act through the administrative restrictions. Therefore, in one place they initiate church scandals, by giving a false-bishop the name of Lazarus, and to another activist that of Stephan. After a long period of building up the hierarchy of the Moscow Patriarchate, they have, probably, prepared also other suitable workers for themselves, in particular those, who busy themselves with a so-called "peace" with our Church. They just could not work on the simple faithful, especially among the pious old ladies.

Glory be to God, on the territory in Russia we have our bishop, who recently came out of the salvific catacombs.

But, if we wish to have in Russia more of the saved with the approaching times of Antichrist, we have to abandon the defensive tactics in the war against evil and decisively go on the offensive. Now we have the first base from which to attack: we have Suzdal. But he, as a sort of Divine indication for further struggle, came over to us without any effort on our part. In order to start the actual attack, we have to act not only through the declarative resolutions of our last Council of Bishops, but actively use this base, sent to us by God.

From the history of earlier persecutions we know that, after they had stopped, successful missionary work was done not only and not so much by those who had left the catacombs. Sometimes, also by such unexpected people as Saul, people with different characters, more ready to take a risk; thus, with the mass conversions happening, there might arise someone among them, with his minuses, not noticed in the beginning.

Therefore I suggest that at present we have to make the conditions easier for accepting believers, especially from the clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate and, certainly, as soon as possible strengthen our hierarch in Russia. After all, so much time has passed and the list for candidates to the episcopate has not grown a bit, and without bishops, the clergy cannot grow.

We should also keep in mind and not get confused by fact that if new candidates appear, there is always the possibility of the appearance of various slanders, which will be skillfully spread by the still existing KGB. If here, under conditions of freedom, we are not safe from the actions of Soviet agents, then it will be even more difficult for us to sort this out in Russia, where their network is far from liquidated. Let us keep in mind the habit of slander is not easily eliminated.

S. K. writes me regarding the mission in Russia: "A very important brake is Vladyka Lazar's lack, as he affirms, of the possibility of accepting into our Church clergy from all over our country, but only in the Tambov region. It is necessary that he should have such a right. It is also necessary that Archimandrite Valentin have such a right, who will, I hope, return as a bishop. The point is that, at present, Vladyka Lazar as well as Fr. Valentin are approached by many priests. All the papers, as Vladyka Lazar says, he sends to America. While these are on the way back and forth the parishes might run away, be closed by the authorities and so on".

Father Herman Ivanov-Trinadzaty, after being in Russia and getting acquainted with the events there writes that our people have been very much perplexed that Fr. Valentin was remained an archimandrite and has not been consecrated while there are three of our bishops in Russia. He writes: "I see all the 'shortcomings' of Fr. Valentin (he writes in quotation marks) in that he is not a typical clergyman from abroad, but I can TESTIFY that he sees it himself and is trying to change. He is namely a person who fell from the sky on our heads and who can move the situation forward. He is capable of radically changing the situation in Russia to our benefit. But to do this he needs the bishop's miter".

I have had personal and prolonged conversations with Fr. Valentin and have not noticed the shortcomings which were reported by Vl. Mark. It seems that his life and labor within our Church during the past months have not passed in vain.

While openly acting in this manner, we have no reason to close the catacomb activities. In the years of Antichrist the catacombs might be useful. Their unification with open parishes happens with difficulties. As we know from the schism of Novatius and Novatian after the First Ecumenical Council – this is a separate problem. If I err regarding the nearness of Antichrist's appearance and soon there will be normal life in Russia, then the temptation of confessionalism soon will be eliminated, especially if we will not remain indifferent toward such events as the scandalous examples of our senior

clergymen, who travel to Russia as the honorary guests of the Moscow Patriarchate, while ignoring at the same time a bishop of our Church in Russia.

The humble servant of the Synod of Bishops

+ Bishop Gregory

Editorial note: When publishing this report by Bishop Gregory from nearly 11 years ago, we considered it would be appropriate to give a summary of the "missionary" activity of the ROCOR under the presidency of Metropolitan Vitaly.

At present time within the split ROCOR under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Vitaly there are 3 bishops in Russia. Under Metropolitan Laurus one.

Under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Valentin (The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church) there are already 11 Bishops. Undoubtedly, he has followed the suggestion by Bishop Gregory, made on many occasions to Metropolitan Vitaly and the Synod of Bishops, that in order to increase the growth of missionary activities in Russia it is absolutely necessary to increase the number of hierarchs there.

But for the successful work of provocateurs among the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR there would be at present minimum of 15 Bishops, independent of the Moscow Patriarchate¹

Regarding the Jerusalem Patriarchate, it not only has not improved during this period, but rather the opposite – it has worsened. The Israeli government, thus far, categorically refuses to recognize the newly elected Patriarch and this deprives him of any possibility to communicate with the government institutions about any matters.

GETHSEMANE: USURPATION OF IDENTITY, FRAUD AND MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

Very recently, an appeal for financial help for renovation of the St. Mary Magdalene in Gethsemane, Jerusalem, has been mailed out to the Russian Diaspora. This mail introduces the required beneficiary of this appeal in a deliberately false manner, which in turn confuses people and leads to the misallocation of funds. THIS MAIL IS MISLEADING!

The mail was sent on behalf of the Orthodox Palestine Society, Holy Land Section, owner of the said property. Now, the OPS/ Holy Land Section with His Grace Bishop Anthony Grabbe as President, did not initiate this action, and did not empower anyone to this effect.

Its initiators – the OPS/American section and the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem – are actually the agents of the Synod of ROCOR bishops, which for 10 years conducted a law suit against the OPS/Holy Land and lost it in the 1996. Indeed the suit award recognized that the OPS was independent of the Synod of Bishops and was the owner of its real estate, such as The Excavations/Raskopki, Gethsemane, Jericho Garden, etc.

Nevertheless, this defeat did not stop the groundless claims by the Synod against the Orthodox Palestine Society. Not only had the Synod of ROCOR uselessly spent in this suit the 7 million US dollars which Archimandrite Anthony had won in 1994 against the state of Israel, but also:

1. It did usurp, fraudulently sell in 1995 and rob 7 million US dollars from the OPS for the first garden in Jericho.
2. For 15 years the ROCOR has not paid its rent for Gethsemane to the OPS.
3. In 1998 the ROCOR – in the person of Archbishop Mark – did prevent the renovation work on the roof of St. Alexander's Chapel (The Excavations) in Jerusalem, by interfering with the Society with which the agreement was already made in the hope of forcing Bishop Anthony "to surrender" to the Synod.
4. Since 1994 the ROCOR has interfered constantly with the Society's incorporation proceedings in Israel, which directly threatens its very existence.
5. Finally, **after having recognized the OPS as valid during the 10 year long suit (from 1986-1996)** the Synod nonetheless did not hesitate to appoint ex nihilo **a false OPS/ Holy Land Section** in the autumn of 2000, as signed by Metropolitan Vitaly, Archbishop Laurus, Bishop Barnabas, Bishop Gabriel and Archbishop Mark. Today, this false section pretends to be incorporated in Israel in lieu of and instead of the true 120 year old OPS

Regarding the American Section of the OPS – the second initiator of this misleading mail – since 1986, when Metropolitan Vitaly violated the regular vote of the General Assembly and Section's Statutes by appointing a president of his choice, its whole life and all its acts are obviously null and void.

- Finally, the ROCOR & Co – the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, the OPS/USA and the OPS/ false Holy Land section – have usurped the identity, usurped the logo and have deliberately deceived the faithful and stolen from the true Palestine Society, headed by His Grace Bishop Anthony, the money which were primarily to be used for its own priority project – i.e. replacement of the St. Alexander Chapel roof.

Is it necessary to initiate a suit against the Synod in order to stop the hatred, the deceit, the cupidity and the destructive madness of the ROCOR Bishops?

Any donations will be gratefully received and may be sent to the **Orthodox Palestine Society of Holy Land**

**5612 Sylvan Avenue
Riverdale, NY 10471**

UNLIMITED SERVILITY OR CONSCIOUS BLASPHEMY

So far, the Moscow Patriarch Alexis Ridiger "Drozdov" never was subject to criticism in the Russian press. Rather the opposite, all his declarations and acts even the controversial ones, always met with positive reactions in the "media".

However, in his servility towards "former" KGB agents, he himself being also a "former" KGB agent, undoubtedly went too far when he consecrated the church of St. Sophia of Divine Wisdom for the use of FSB (Federal Security Service as the former KGB agency was recently renamed). This act provoked an unprecedented, widespread uproar in contemporary Russia.

The newspaper "Noviya Izvestiya" ("New News") of March 12th published an article by Eugene Komarov, with title "FSB Pulled the ROC Toward Its 'Piar' "(a word derived from a Catholic monastic order) in which it is related that Alexis Ridiger has consecrated a church which was closed by the atheists in 1934 and renovated in August of last year. According to the newspaper, 'only now, when the standing of the special service troops has declined, was this means of information useful: once again the guardians in the black robes are called to be defenders of the regime – after all, the old horse will not damage the furrow. During the Soviet years the KGB constantly used the 'tserkovniki' [members of the Church] to support their actions... After the consecration, the director of the FSB Nicholas Patrushev thanked His Beatitude Patriarch Alexis".

They go on to report that "Nor did Patrushev behave modestly: he pointed out that... the members of the staff... carry out a difficult duty in defending the safety of Russian government". He was echoed by the Patriarch who, according to Interfax, expressed the hope that "the prayers in the new church would help the members of the FSB to carry out the difficult duty of securing the safety of the country from external and internal, if not exactly enemies, then ill-wishers. Then, in addition to the already existing doctrine of the security (in the carrying out of which the independent TV was disbanded), the Patriarch declared that 'today, also the spiritual security in Russia happens to be under threat because there are powers which intrude into our daily life and make attempts to fill the spiritual vacuum'. In other words, he actually asked the Chekists to help him with their own methods in the struggle against its competitors: Protestants and Catholics". Most certainly, the first will be the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, which is not mentioned by the author of this article.

As the ceremony concluded, Ridiger expressed the hope that the residents of Moscow and the members of FSB "will often visit this church".

E. Komarov quite reasonably notes that "the church is on the agency's territory, so that most naturally one could visit it just in two ways: either by becoming a member of the FSB, or by being dragged into to the inner court of Lubyanka in a van marked 'Meat'" as in the Soviet days.

Then Komarov reminds us that it was precisely in the torture-chambers of the Lubyanka that thousands of bishops, clergy and lay people of the Russian Orthodox Church perished and gives details of the KGB membership of Patriarch "Drozdov."

The article concludes with a quotation from a letter by a subscriber to the newspaper, M. Kondakov (a parishioner of the patriarchal Epiphany Cathedral Church in Moscow) who writes: "The consecration of the church in the Lubyanka is very symbolic... it was on the anniversary of the death of Stalin (March 5th, 1953) when people, influenced by humanitarian feelings, gathered at the stones of Solovki [Monastery/Prison Camp] to commemorate the victims killed by the KGB. 'His Beatitude' wanted to present to the heirs of these executioners a church. One cannot imagine a cruder spitting into the face of his own people and the memory of the 'New Martyrs of Russia'. This action certainly is covered by the statute # 282 UK RF dealing with 'inciting religious hostility.' "

The national newspaper Izvestiya.RU of March 6th published an article entitled "Chekists Now Have a Place to Pray". It reports that on the outside wall of the church there is gold plaque, stating that the church was restored "by the zeal of the FSB". The newspaper reports that the majority of donations came from the Center of Civil Connections of the FSB. "Practically, all of the donors have served in the ranks of the security agencies' "

The newspaper "Kommersant Daily" of March 7th described this event in an article entitled "The Members of FSB Now Have a Place to Pray for Their Sins".

The Russian Information Agency published an article and named it "To Which God Do They Pray in the FSB?"

In the editorial we find: "One can hardly imagine a more absurd event. However, if the Lord's grace (there are many miracles in the world) really came down upon the Chekists and all of them were to pray and fast, because the presence in such a building of Bolshevik-Soviet-Russian Special Services alone already leaves a black, diabolic trace on the soul of every man. And if to mention the traditional selection for the membership into these structures, in general, any conversation about the divine is out of place. The Lubyanka, with all its dark history, all the numerous crimes, committed during the XXth century, is not a place for God's temple. No communion with God is possible in such a place. However, exactly in such a place has Alexis conducted his rite of consecration of a church. If any religious rite were possible in the Lubyanka, then it would be the rite of exorcism. But I am afraid none of the higher ranking hierarchs of the ROC are capable of such a podvig.

"Thus, the church established by Alexis will be for the internal security agents use, since it is situated within an enclosed space. It has no direct access from the street and one can enter it only through the main entrance of the FSB. Therefore, only unrepentant sinners will visit it. And in it there will be no one to bring them to repentance. Unquestionably, the priests will be appointed by the FSB, from the well-checked cadre. Truly, if the Cheka and its heirs long ago settled within the Orthodox Church, why would not such a Church also be set up in the 'Cheka'? The entire way of life of the high-ranking hierarchs of the ROC gives grounds to believe that their faith in Christ long ago turned into a formality meaning nothing. Can people who aim at nothing but getting rich and therefore 'trading in the temple', closing their eyes to many misdeeds of their circle, praising a criminal regime and who in the name of Christ plead that all of this will be tolerated – deserve the name of Christians? The ROC for a long time has served not God, but the authorities, no matter which: be it

the imperial Romanoffs, the Bolshevik-Soviets or the Russian... And definitely, there can be no Divine grace in a place, where, as Talkov sang, 'a priest hides under his cassock the KGB distillate' "

In a similar way the consecration of the Church in the Lubyanka was criticized by the Internet "inoSMIRU" in an article by Miriam Neibert entitled "A Russian Spy Who Came to Church" and which directs the attention of the readers to: "today, the connection of spying activities with religion does not surprise any more in Russia. The biggest example is presented by President Vladimir Putin himself, who used to be a KGB agent and under Yeltsin's tenure was head of the internal FSB reconnaissance and who at major holidays goes to the church in front of the entire nation and maintains friendly relations with the Patriarch... Definitely, the Russian Orthodox Church has no problem with the internal reconnaissance service as the organizations defending human rights and the environment might."

"Obshchaya Gazeta" ("The General Gazette") regarding the "consecration" of the church on Lubyanka published the article of Oleg Chekrygin "...And I Will Tell You Who You Are". This article ends with the paragraph: "The time has come for all decent people, who came to faith in the Church during the sad period of persecution, in order to be with Christ, to depart from the 'midst of the perverted' and shake off their glory and riches, which they have begged from the authorities, while sharing with them the responsibility for all their crimes against the people... And we will on our own choose a worthy Patriarch – the people as main bearers of the faith have a right to do so and do not have to ask permission from anybody, And let that one stay 'the Master of Lubyanka'. Lubyanka is not the whole Russia, but only her Bastille, which will be definitely destroyed by the free nations. Russia is big – and thank God there is plenty of space to retreat!"

In many ways the author of this article is correct, but he makes a grave mistake in the matter of an election of the Patriarch by the "people" alone free from control. He forgets that the Episcopate presides over a faithful people and only both of them together make the one Church. According to Church tradition, without a bishop, there is no Church and that according to the 1st Apostolic and 60th Carthage Canons – the bishop is installed by two or three bishops, however, "It is by all means proper that a bishop should be appointed by all the bishops in the province" (4th canon of the 1st Ecumenical Council). According to other Councils, for example Antiochian 19th Canon, for the election of the new bishop there should be present at least three bishops and the others have to send their written approval. The election is to be performed in the presence of the Metropolitan. So, where is this freedom of the "people" to elect a bishop, and especially a First Hierarch?

Most of the informers stated that the Chief of the FSB, Nicholas Pastrushev, was given by Ridiger an icon of St. Nicholas, and Ridiger got from Patrushev an icon of St. Alexis and the symbolic key to the church.

Such a sober reaction to the matter of "consecration" of the church by the "former" agent of KGB Ridiger "Drozov" on part of the whole number of publications leaves one pleasantly surprised and hopeful that the readers will take the published information not only into consideration, but also as advice.

"FOR GENERAL KNOWLEDGE – DECLARATION OF THE SERBIAN SYNOD ON ANTI-SEMITIC PHENOMENA AND ACTS"

The Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church published under this title its resolution of February 5th, 2002 in its own newspaper "The Path of Orthodoxy," printed in the issue of March-April 2002. (Our translation from the Serbian, "Ch. N.")

From time immemorial, the Serbian Orthodox Church has taught her flock – which to this day included in her canonical jurisdiction the Serbian people as well as other nationalities – to love their neighbor, based upon love of God and especially the compassionate love for a neighbor in peril, toward anyone who suffers, who is persecuted... Being true to her essence and call, she does this as well in our days. Therefore, with a clear conscience one may say that, only due to the beneficial influence of the Orthodox Faith and its living practice, the Serbian nation is one of the few, within which there never have been and are non-existent any anti-Jewish sentiments and relations, nor even more – the unchristian persecutions and inhuman pogroms of Jews which cast a dark shadow upon the history and the conscience of some nations. On the contrary, our people, who have passed through their own sufferings and sacrifices, have known how to feel and share the sorrows and pain of its fellow-countrymen and citizens of the Jewish faith and ethnicity and where it was possible, even to prevent and soften it. And on the contrary: solidarity with the sufferings and injustices through which the Jewish people were going historically which culminated in the terrible holocaust of six million during the Second World War, forced and inspired the Serbian nation, which has carried the cross of its own history, both ancient and contemporary, and even most recently, feel and experience the undefeated love of God and in their own weakness and faith in the victory of divine good over the satanic evil, as well as friendliness and love toward a nation whose sufferings and persecution not only did not annihilate it, but strengthened its will and spirit, whose adherents **are spiritually close to us** [?!] despite differences in faith and "whose fathers, and for whom Christ came in the flesh" as the Apostle Paul writes. (Rom. 9: 5).

Of course, this said, it does not mean that within the Serbian people there has never been and is not today any anti-Semitism, rather, the anti-Jewish attitudes of individual people and groups, who do not restrain themselves from crude anti-Semitic acts and who use the "words of hatred". Superficial people of evil intent attribute these "words of hatred" to the influence of Orthodoxy and St. Sava and hasten to accuse in particular the Orthodox Church, which spiritually guides and instructs the Serbian People, of being a root cause of anti-Semitism in individual persons and groups. Such accusations are more easily made when the authors of anti-Jewish texts and anti-Semitic acts often mimic and camouflage themselves as "custodians of threatened Church values", "the saviors of Orthodoxy", "fighters against the

Jewish world conspiracy" and, accordingly they give to their publications the names of Christian and truly Orthodox groups, confusing those who are not sufficiently informed.

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, with full responsibility, declares before God and humanity, that despite the above mentioned mimicry and manipulation of churchliness, the specific mimicry of Church terminology and symbols, anti-Semitic groups and individuals do not in any way represent the Serbian Orthodox Church, nor Orthodoxy, but they represent only themselves and no one else. Neither the Serbian Orthodox Church, nor any other Orthodox Church in the world in general, wants and cannot be responsible for any anti-Semitic pronouncements and acts; she decisively denounces them and condemns them. This concerns also the participation of Archpriest Zharko Gavrilovich, a former rector of a parish in Belgrade, in his anti-Jewish actions, especially his recent remark about the practice of incest among the Jews, as supposedly normal and approved by Jewish authorities, which was immediately rejected by them as slander and nonsense. These declarations of the retired priest, which were made without the knowledge and blessing of his bishop, in this case, His Beatitude Serbian Patriarch Paul, are in no way a declaration of the Serbian Church or the policy of the Serbian Orthodox Church. In them Archpriest Zharko speaks for himself and not in the name of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Usually, he likes to "defend" it from itself and visually attacks the Head, his immediate bishops, when he writes "open letters" to the Synod on various matters and, as a rule, imagined or deliberately invented issues, like the supposed acceptance of the New Calendar and similar nonsense. The Holy Synod of Bishops is sure that His Beatitude the Patriarch, as Archbishop of Belgrade and Karlovci, will know how to defend his dignity and spiritual authority and in an archpastoral manner will present before humanity the true image of the Church and her teaching of piety, despite some one or some priest who has become ill with pride and is not foreign to the human crippled mind (I Tim. 6, 3-5)".

What a humiliating "Declaration" of the Serbian Synod! One may speak of the criminality of pogroms and of personal hatred toward any one, but to say in the name of the Orthodox Church that despite the difference of faiths, it has a "spiritual closeness" with the obvious enemies of Our Savior – sounds like nothing else but a betrayal of the Orthodox Faith. This declaration of the Serbian Patriarchate is on a par with the traitorous speech of Alexis Ridiger in 1991 to the New York rabbis!

THE JEWISH "MOSHIAKH"

The Russian language newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo," on April 1st has published an unsigned article under the notorious title "Moshiakh". At the very beginning of this article, in the bold print there is a quotation from a speech of an Lubavitcher rabbi, who declared: "...Moshiakh is here! We just have to open our eyes to see and meet him!"

According to this report, the Lubavitcher rabbis, starting in 1991 began a "world wide campaign" to spread information about their Moshiakh. For this reason, there is a wide-spread literature in various world languages. The article explains that "Moshiakh is a great righteous man, the wise man of the Torah, a leader, a king, elected by the Almighty and acknowledged by the people. According to the teaching of our wise men, Moshiakh is a person, born of a Jewish mother, a direct descendent of King David. He has to persuade the Jewish people to live according to laws of the Torah, lead the struggle for establishment of spiritual values in our people and win this struggle. He also has to restore the Jerusalem Temple and gather all the Jews in the land of Israel.

Our wise men have determined the signs of the "epoch of Moshiakh" *which precisely correspond to the latest world events and which with the world situation*" [Emphasis by "Ch. N."]. Further it states the signs that these days have come: "The indifference to our own faith, annihilation of values, ridiculing of traditions, decline in morals, spiritual inflation, cruel irreconcilability and, at the same time, sharp spiritual enmity and search for the meaning of life... Does not this remind you of the sudden and swift fall into the abyss, after which without fail there is to be a no lesser great upward flight?"

As we know, the preparation by the Jews for the appearance of their Moshiakh goes forward with the gigantic steps. In the matter of restoration of the Temple — everything is resolved: all building material and funds were prepared long ago and it can be literally built within a couple of weeks. It is not without reason that Sharon started a merciless war against the Palestinians, who have two especially sacred mosques on the Temple Mount. By the way, for the consecration of the future temple there has to be the blood of a special "red heifer", bred especially, with not a trace of even a hair of a different color, as per the law (Numbers 19:2).

In our April issue #4 (60), 1997, we published information that an American farmer, Claude Lodt (a Protestant supporter of Israel) bred such a heifer and it so greatly interested rabbis in Israel that Rabbi Chaim Richman came to the USA in order to determine if this heifer fits the requirements for the ritual. However, now it has become known that the heifer is not fit for the ritual, because she had some white hairs in her tail!

Now, after 5 years, the matter has gone forward. According to Internet information from Israel on April 12th, a month ago such a heifer was born in Israel itself. The owner of the heifer immediately informed the Temple institute in Jerusalem about it and two rabbis rushed to the farm: Manohem Rakover and the above mentioned Rabbi Chaim Richman. Both of them have examined the heifer and they have decided that it is a candidate for the purification ritual of the temple. According Jewish tradition, the red heifer is a herald of the "messianic era" as is reported in this article. "It is definitely an important development towards the rebuilding of the Holy Temple". And if it is the actual heifer – the future will tell.

THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCH AND ISRAEL GOVERNMENT

"The New York Times" on April 26th published an article by Serge Schmemmann regarding the relationship of the Greek Jerusalem Patriarchate and the Israeli government.

The Israeli government so far has not recognized patriarch Irineos, who was installed in mid-September of last year,, although, there is a slight hope that the matter might be positively resolved. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared recently that he is ready to recognize the Patriarch, however, his cabinet has refused to agree to it.

This refusal to recognize the Patriarch is preventing him from actively administering his Church, to the point where he is not allowed to have a bank account and he cannot get an exit visa from Jerusalem.

There is an opinion that the main reason for these restrictions is that the Patriarchate is the largest real estate property owner within Jerusalem and Palestine. The Patriarchate is renting out properties and earns millions of dollars in income. In particular, quite a few plots are rented to the Israeli government. The rent agreements will expire within this decade.

Patriarch Irineos promised that he would act "in terms of transparency, mutual interest, and absolute conformity with the applicable laws where the land is situated".

The article stressed that despite the fact that the Patriarchate is keeper of all the main holy sites in Jerusalem, it remains under a shadow, especially after the conflict in Bethlehem, while other confessions actively declare their presence.

At present, some 200 Palestinians are hiding in the Bethlehem church which is surrounded by Israeli's troops.

THE EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS COUNCIL

A newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of April 12th reported that in Belgium there was just recently formed the very first All-European Religious Council whose aim is to "contribute to a harmonious cohesive Europe" without any competition with already existing religious groups. At the first meeting 30 representatives of various religions were present. Among the participants were (besides Belgium's Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Brussels) also Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk, who represented the Russian Orthodox Church, Chief Rabbi of France Rene-Samuel Sirat and Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of April 17th quoted the words of Sarosh, a Zoroastrian and a co-chair of Britain's Inter-Faith Network, who said: "We aim to build a harmonious, cohesive Europe, and to ensure that all faiths exert an appropriate influence... this is the first advisory body of its kind. We will work from consensus, rather than as a parliamentary-type body, so there'll be issues we don't agree on... But if we keep in mind the ultimate aim of the common good and cooperate where we can, this will be a positive start. Of course, there'll always be extremists who say their faith is the only true one. But if religious leaders encourage dialogue, people at the local level will begin to view their situation differently as well. It will be of utmost importance to work in tandem with existing Christian, Muslim or Buddhist councils, keeping the focus very much on peace".

Cardinal Danneels declared that "it is an interesting initiative" and that he will do his best to make it "as powerful as possible".

The newly established Council was sponsored by the World Conference of Religions and Peace in New York and already has offices in more than 100 countries.

The next Conference is scheduled for November and will be held in Norway. The organizers hope that by that time the membership will be greatly increased.

It was also pointed out that since the September attack on the World Trade Center in New York, most European countries noted an increase of anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish incidents.

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND MUSLIMS

Two Internet agencies: СМИ.ru and LENTA.RU В РОССИИ ON March 25th and 26th reported flirting by the Moscow Patriarchate with Iraq. The first article is called "Diplomacy of the ROC", and the second -- "The Russian Orthodox Church Regulates Relations with Hussein". Of course, the initiator of this action is no one, but the scandalously famous head of the Foreign Relations Department, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk, with the KGB code name of "Mikhailov".

It is expected that Metropolitan Kirill will meet in Baghdad with the minister for religions and he will deliver to him the letter by Alexis Ridiger. The visit was to be concluded on March 31st.

According to agency RIA "Novosti" (News) -- "this visit will be the first one not only in the history of Russian-Iraq relations, but also Soviet-Iraq relations".

According to Interfax, the aim of this trip is "a conversation with the representatives of the highest state leadership of Iraq regarding the humanitarian situation in the country.[?!] There are also meetings scheduled with spiritual leaders of the Christian and Muslim communities in Iraq and with the Russian speaking Diaspora".

СМИ.ru gives interesting commentaries on this that at least it is a very strange trip for the most prominent clergyman of the MP to a country where Christianity of any denomination is quite openly persecuted.

According to the commentary of this agency, "The visit of the delegation of the ROC to Iraq is significant in many respects -- the hierarchs of the ROC are visiting Iraq for the first time.

Secondly, the Department for the Church's Foreign Relations stresses that the trip is being made as a return visit of the "representatives of the Christian Churches in Iraq, who visited Russia in 1998 as guests of the Russian Orthodox Church". (Isn't it a bit late to return a visit after 4 years have passed? "Ch. N.")

Thirdly, after September 11th the government pressure by official authorities against Christian faiths in general has greatly increased. Mainly the Assyrian, Chaldeo-Catholic and Armenian Churches are suffering, who by government decision are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Wakf's (Islamic Properties). And this is despite the fact that some of them decisively supported Saddam's regime and sharply criticize the Western sanctions against Baghdad.

Fourthly, the ROC along with other confessions for a long time made declarations against the sanctions regarding Iraq. "The world's basic Christian Churches consistently appeal to the world to pay more attention to the needs of Iraq's population which is suffering from consequences of political and economic isolation forced upon them."

Fifthly, the visit is undertaken against the background of military attacks upon Iraq by 'some countries,' members of the anti-terrorist coalition. And this particular condition forces us to view this visit by the delegation of the ROC not only as an inter-church event, but as an external political one, which returns the ROC to the period of the USSR when she was fulfilled diplomatic errands for the country's supreme leadership". (Emphasis by "Ch. N.")

THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE POPE

For a number of years the Moscow Patriarchate has repeated her complaints about the "expansion" of Roman Catholicism in Russia and Ridiger on many occasions has insisted that to speak of a Papal visit to Russia would be possible only after Catholics stop their propaganda and the Uniates return the churches they have grabbed from the Orthodox. Quite a reasonable demand! However, behind the backs of the faithful something quite different is happening.

From Interfax information on March 30th we find out that Ridiger has sent to the Head of the Catholic Church an Easter greeting in which he said: "On account of Pascha, on these joyful days, I greet you with the kiss of love and sincerely wish that the Lord would preserve and strengthen you and would grant you strength for many and blessed days".

THE PRIMATE OF THE "ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA" METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS RETIRES

The primate of the "Russian Orthodox Church in America," Metropolitan Theodosy of All-America and Canada submitted his request for retirement, due to poor health. The Synod accepted his request and gave him the status of First Hierarch in retirement, and expressed their gratitude for his service to the Church up until now.

The election of a new First Hierarch will be made at the All-America Council in Florida, scheduled for July 21st, 2002. The procedure for the election will be established on the Synod's meeting, on May 24th in St. Tikhon's Monastery. The temporary governance of the OCA is entrusted to the Metropolitan of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, Herman (Svaiko).

It is rumored, that he does not enjoy the special respect and love of his flock.