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CHRIST IS RISEN!

The Editors greet their readers on the Feast of Feasts and wish them all the very best for these joyous days. We also thank those readers who have sent us their greetings.

*Due to a trip of the Editor in Chief to Russia for 2 months,
the next issue of "Church News" will be published at the end of July.*

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PASCHAL EPISTLE
of Metropolitan Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND ARCH-PASTORS, PASTORS, AND FAITHFUL CHILDREN
 OF THE AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

When Thou hadst fallen asleep in the flesh as one mortal, O King and Lord, Thou didst rise again on the third day, raising up Adam from corruption, and abolishing death: O Pascha of incorruption! O Salvation of the world!
 (Exapostilarion of Pascha)

CHRIST IS RISEN!

With such sacred and ever-living words we greet each other, sharing our Christian joy in this "truly sacred and supremely festive night." The risen Christ is the never-fading source of joy for the entire human race. In "this, the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad" in our risen Christ Jesus!

Any Orthodox Christian who has ever experienced the otherworldly joy of Pascha, will agree that the heart of any truly alive Christian soul can never grow tired of hearing the paschal greeting "Christ is Risen!" nor of the short but profound troparion of Pascha, nor of the exalted poetry of the Paschal canon, nor of the triumphant "Catechetical Homily" of St. John Chrysostom, which enjoins us all to taste of the Paschal Lamb at the present Mystical Supper.

To some skeptics it might seem that everything that there is to say about Pascha has already been said, and that it would be impossible to find any new way of expressing the sense and meaning of the present celebration. But this is not so! "Every tongue is at a loss," and human speech is utterly incapable of expressing the full meaning of Pascha. Any word that we might say about Pascha can do nothing more than highlight only one of the many facets of this jewel of a celebration, but to cast light on every facet of it would be impossible. The inexhaustibility of Pascha is the inexhaustibility of the Divine Nature Itself, about which St. John the Theologian said, "that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."

Those of us unto whom the Lord will vouchsafe the eternal life of bliss in the Kingdom of God, will go from "strength to strength" in the knowledge of this Divine Nature, in becoming one with God, but will never be able to reach the end of this process—for eternity is endless. And in like manner, it is impossible to follow Pascha through to its end. We can only stop dead in our tracks and stand in holy fear before the mystery of the Resurrection which has been opened before us, and out of the surplus of feeling in our hearts, our mouths cannot but repeat, over and over again, "Christ is RISEN from the dead, trampling down death by death, and on those in their graves bestowing life."

For many, even for many of those who formally belong to the Church, the ineffable joy of Pascha remains unattainable. Of course, the universal rejoicing of the Church of Christ cannot leave them completely indifferent; however, they continue to understand Pascha only as a "Great Feast" with eggs and kulichi, as an "ancient national custom," or as an "historical event from the Gospels." From whence does such a superficial understanding of the mystery of Pascha arise?

The main cause of such an approach to Pascha is insufficient familiarity with the life of the Church, with the events that she relives and in which she takes part during the Great Fast, and especially, during Holy Week. The joy of Pascha is a continuation of the sorrow of Great and Holy Friday and the mystical and universal silence of Holy Saturday. "Yesterday, was I crucified with Thee, O Christ, yesterday I was buried with Thee, and today I arise with Thine arising," as it says in the Paschal canon. Whoever is not crucified together with the Savior, whoever is not sealed in the tomb with Him, cannot possibly rise with Him on the holy day of Pascha.

There is yet one more unfortunate error among many in the Church crowd – and that is their understanding that the events of Holy Week and Pascha are only a "commemoration" of events that happened once upon a time, many hundreds of years ago. No, dear brothers and sisters, it is not only a commemoration, but a participation and an initiation into these events!

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, not in an illusory way, not just outwardly, really and completely became man, while yet remaining God, and united with Himself all of our human nature. And so we are called, while yet remaining human, to be united through grace, with God, and to become sharers in His Divine life.

Should we be but bystanders at the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, then we shall be like the mean-spirited crowd of Jews, or at the very most, like the soldiers who guarded His tomb.

No, we must be crucified and rise together with Christ, just as the Church prompts us in the services before Pascha and at Pascha. When we come to church for the services, we leave the world in which we live, we step out of time, and are translated to the place where Christ is all, and in all.

The closest unification with Christ takes place in the Mystery of the Eucharist, through the reception of His Body and Blood. All of our divine services revolve around this communion, initiating us into the divine life of Christ. The paschal service is primarily a Eucharistic one. In the time of the Old Covenant, the sacrificial lamb was immolated at Pascha. This was a prefiguration of the innocent Lamb of God – our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The joy of our present-day Pascha is intensified for us, the true Orthodox Christians of Russia, and for her children of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church abroad, by the news that our persecution in the courts, which has

been going on for the last three years in Suzdal, has finally come to an end, although, of course, it is too early for us to speak of a complete cessation of persecution against Holy Orthodoxy in Russia.

In this world, where evil yet reigns, those who desire to live piously, in accordance with God's commandments, with the precepts of the holy Fathers of the Church, and with the canons of the Orthodox Church, will always be persecuted. The holy Apostle Paul warned Christians that even if the Lord does at times send a small respite from troubles on the Church's path of confessing the Faith, we should use this time to prepare for yet greater persecutions, and to strengthen our faith and our resolve. In no way should we allow ourselves to fall into laxness. A Christian must always "keep the divine watch," and "not give sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids," but stand spiritually at the ready.

In our stand in the Truth, we must be firmly aware of and reinforce our remembrance of the fact that nothing in this world can withstand the power of Christ. The petty liars who challenge it, who are nothing more than protégés of the new atheists, and hirelings of the Moscow Patriarchate, who send their "documents" with their forged stamps and seals to addresses all over Russia and beyond, seem especially sad and pitiful. They seek to destroy the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, which they once betrayed, receiving in exchange for their treachery their falsely-named awards and temporary "happiness" in this perverted world.

The Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, at home and abroad, is a *Church*, not a human institution, in contrast to all of their "religious organizations, unions, and movements." It is pointless to fight against God. The Church of God has stood forever, and will stand forever, radiating the purity of its confession, no matter how much she is persecuted.

The fate of those who war against God and the Church will be deserving of many tears. For this reason, our goal consists, insofar as we are able, in trying to turn them and their organizations away from such a disastrous satanic endeavor which they have taken up in ignorance.

Most unfortunately, in our human weakness, it sometimes starts to look like our enemies are stronger than we are, and the flock of faithful and loyal Christians is becoming smaller and smaller. It is unbelievably difficult to bear all of the sorrows, the slanders from false brethren, and to be in an absolute minority in this world. But let us not let succumb to despair!

Let us remember how the Myrrh-bearing Women, by their selfless love for the Lord, by their undeterred desire to follow Him on His path of suffering, became the first to hear from the risen Life-giver Christ Himself, the greatly comforting word, "Rejoice!"

Jesus Christ, the Savior of the World, warned us that we would have sorrow in this world, but that our sorrow would quickly turn into joy. And it is already turning into joy, for our Lord has conquered death! "Hades reigns, but not eternally," but the Truth of Christ *is* eternal! And if we wish to be together with eternal truth, then we must not betray it by even as much as one iota, turning away from all of the temptations of this contemporary world and from ecumenical, so-called "World Orthodoxy," with the Moscow Patriarchate at its head.

We, the Orthodox, just as our forefathers in the first centuries of Christianity, are called to be lamps of goodness and compassion, sympathy and love, so that the light of our good deeds should glorify our heavenly Father and His Only-begotten Son, the risen Christ.

May this sacred calling be for us ever a living one; and may the Lord Who has called us into His wondrous light, enlighten us by the light of His resurrection; and may the risen Life-giver turn the present Paschal feast into unfading spiritual joy, which no one shall ever be able to take away from us.

TRULY CHRIST IS RISEN!

Lowly

VALENTIN

Metropolitan of Suzdal and of Vladimir.

Pascha 2004

In the God-preserved city of Suzdal

From the Editors:

After receiving the Paschal Epistle of the First Hierarchy of the AROC, His Eminence Metropolitan Valentin, the editor of "Ch. N." addressed the Diocesan Administration with a request to clarify the term "documents" and "forged stamps and seals". In answer we received the following explanation:

The "forged stamps and seals" means that the MP is distributing the "verdict" in the name of the court which convicted the Metropolitan, which is illegal. In responding to a complaint of protest, they answered that they have nothing to do with this distribution, that the stamps and seals are forged, and that it is definitely punishable by law. Nevertheless, the court has taken no measures to stop these outrages. In general, the attacks against us continue, although they have themselves revoked the conviction. In this manner, the Epistle points out that the enemies have been disgraced. But one cannot rest with this, since the persecutions can begin again at any time.

FIRST HIERARCH OF THE AROC METROPOLITAN VALENTIN IN USA

On the first day of Pascha, the parishioners of the St. Nicholas Church in Staten Island (NY) were overjoyed to learn that in the evening the First Hierarchy of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir would arrive in New York.

The rector of St. Nicholas Church in Staten Island, Fr. Vladimir Shishkoff, met the Metropolitan at the airport and brought him to his house, where Vladyka has stayed during previous visits to the USA.

On Tuesday and Wednesday the Metropolitan had a meeting with several clergymen of American background, who have expressed their wish to be under his omophorion.

On Bright Week Friday the Metropolitan participated in the vigil service and on Saturday he served the Divine Liturgy. Concelebrating were Archpriest Vladimir Shishkoff and Hegumen Gerasim (Romanoff). At the service there were present some 20 parishioners.

During the little entrance, the Metropolitan has awarded Fr. Vladimir with the right to wear a mitre, a second cross with jewels and the right to serve with the Royal doors open until the Lord's Prayer.

Some active members of the little parish were awarded with a certificate, blessing their work for the Church. Immediately after the service, the Metropolitan departed for Denver, Colorado, to have a meeting with His Grace Bishop Gregory and his clergymen which lasted for some 5 hours.

During the night it became known that Vladyka was suffering from heart pains. An ambulance was immediately called and by midnight the Metropolitan was brought to a hospital. The doctors who examined the Metropolitan diagnosed his condition to be so severe that an operation was scheduled for the next day (April 8/21). X-rays showed that only one artery (out of 3) was functioning, but was also nearly clogged. According to information received from Dormition Skete, the Metropolitan underwent a bypass operation which lasted for some 5 hours and 5 arteries were corrected.

As of the day after the operation, the doctors believe that His Eminence is **out of danger** for the present. It is expected that he will remain in the hospital for some 10 days and then go to Dormition Skete where he will stay until strong enough to travel to New York and back to Russia.

INTERVIEW WITH FIRST HIERARCH OF ROCOR, METR. LAURUS

The Internet version of Vertograd News # 447 of March 20th published an interview held at Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville by Vsevolod (Filipiev) with Metropolitan Laurus. The following interview was given on March 16 "special to the newspaper 'Russkii Vestnik' " – probably the most pro-Patriarchal newspaper in Russia!

This interview was published in the recently received issue of "Russkii Vestnik" # 6 (634). On the first page there is a large photograph of Metropolitan Laurus and again on page 3 there is a photograph of smaller size.

Question: *Your Eminence! What do you think: how can the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Church Abroad develop?*

Answer: I hope that the relations will develop for the benefit to the Russian people. The main obstacle for the rapprochement [cblizhenie, lit: the coming together] of the two parts of the Russian Church – the Church Abroad and **the Russian Mother Church** – always was that the leadership of the Russian Church was not free. Being part of the Russian Church, the Church Abroad could not be in contact with the Church administration which was subordinated to and enslaved by the hostile government. The Church administration existed under such conditions that it was impossible to understand what was done there freely and what under pressure. Now the godless government has collapsed, at the head of the Russian state are people at least formally Orthodox; between the government and church authorities there is mutual understanding and support, so that now, it is impossible to talk about the lack of freedom for the Russian Church. [all emphasis by "Ch. N."]

At present, the essential issue that hinders rapprochement is the official membership of the Moscow Patriarchate in the Ecumenical Movement, although on the level of the flock and clergy there is no such participation. The Russian Church Abroad has always steadfastly observed the Church canons without reproaching with those who depart from them, and was never silent when the Church's truth was violated. And Ecumenism is the heresy of all heresies; therefore it is important that the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate depart from the Ecumenical Movement.

Question: *Have there been any predictions by the Saints and Miracle Workers of the Church Abroad about the possibility of a rapprochement between the Russian Church in Russia and that Abroad?*

Answer: All the hierarchs in exile always lived with the hope of a return to Russia, the homeland; His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony, His Eminence Metropolitan Anastassy, our unforgettable Abba, Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko), the first Abbot of Holy Trinity Monastery – all of them lived with a love for Russia, her history, her Saints and her shrines. Archbishop John (Maximovich), of Shanghai and San Francisco, who was glorified by our Church and whose memory is venerated in Russia, always wished and believed in the union of the two parts of the Russian Church in Christ. He wrote: "The Russian Orthodox Church does not separate herself from the suffering Mother. She sends up prayers for her, preserves her spiritual and material treasures and at some time will unite with her, when **the reasons for separation from her disappear.**" They considered the main reason to be the lack of freedom of the Church in Russia, while the reason for the existence of the Church Abroad was her liberty. "In the name of the liberty of the Church the part of the Russian Church that is Abroad began her independent existence and will continue it so long as the reasons exist that

evoked it." In his epistle Shanghai's Bishop John wrote in 1946 that there will come the time for the return (exactly the return, and not simply union) of the hierarchs of the Church Abroad to the homeland, and Bishop John believed that any resolution regarding the fate of the Russian Church would have to be resolved concretely at an All-Russian Council.

Question: We know that not everybody is in favor of a rapprochement between the two parts of the Russian Church. Indisputably, this is not always without reason. Can one expect opposition to the projected process?

Answer: It is possible that some will be against it. People protest the process of rapprochement and unity of the two parts of the Russian Church for various reasons. Some say: "We do not need Russia, why bother with Russia? We have our own culture and own Church. We have never lived in Russia and our children are not Russian at all. What is this rapprochement to us? We expect from it nothing but trouble." We cannot agree with this opinion. We cannot fence ourselves off from Russia, her destiny and her Church, because upon whether there is a revival of Russia, as an Orthodox state, **depends the destiny of Christianity in the entire world [?!] according to the prophecies of St. Seraphim of Sarov.**

Some recall the words of their parents about Soviet propaganda in China and France, how the Soviets cunningly lured people to come to the Soviet Union and how much those who trusted them have suffered.

Others insist that only members of the Russian Church Abroad may be called Christians, while the Russian Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is the 'Soviet Church', as they put it, and graceless. Instead of love for God and neighbor, instead of love for our homeland, Russia, they instill in their hearts hatred and disdain. Those who stubbornly insist upon this opinion, fall into pride and delusion, into neo-Pharisaism. Maybe, mindlessly due to habit, they are just repeating someone else's opinions. Some falsely cover themselves with the good name of our former Metropolitan Vitaly and are creating a schism within the Church. May the Lord grant them to come to their senses and return to the fold of our Russian Church Abroad, which in matters of Faith has never made any compromises, but also never went to any extremes, never inclining to the left or to the right.

As the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad, I can state that we would be glad to receive back into the fold of the Church all of those who would return. We hope that the Lord would bring all of us Orthodox Russians, to oneness of mind and unity.

Question: If the Lord will lead us to unity of any kind: what will it bring to Russia and Orthodoxy?

Answer: I believe that the rapprochement of the Church Abroad and the Russian Church will bring spiritual benefit to the entire Russian people, **since that will deliver our Church from self-isolation and the disintegration inevitably connected with it** on the one hand, and on the other from dissolution into the surrounding heterodox world.

And moreover, into the Russian Church, the merging with the Church Abroad, which has preserved external and internal spiritual liberty, will **contribute its own special strong [?!] and fresh current.** Russia is big and the people over there relate differently to the Church, there are many who are indifferent and lukewarm, hypocrites and selfish, but there is also a small flock, a select detachment, who burn before God like candles, with their pure and God-fearing lives. These people publish Orthodox books and magazines, build and restore churches, establish schools, visit prisons and hospitals, orphans and the aged, the unfortunate and homeless, each of them serving in positions to which they were called. We also have many people, self-sacrificing and devoted to the Church. And now **as the obstacles invented by people [?!] – mistrust and suspicion and slander – collapse, and as people of good will unite their efforts, then I believe the prophecies of St. Seraphim of Sarov and of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco will be fulfilled – Holy Russia will be restored if even for a short time! I believe that the unity of the two parts of the Russian Church will hasten the complete and final revival of Russia. Orthodox Russia will occupy her own place in the family of nations, and even possibly would restore the political and moral balance of the whole world!"**

This interview of Metropolitan Laurus is a classical example of "adaptability," and even blatant misrepresentation of some facts.

By insisting that during the years immediately after the Revolution the Church was persecuted and therefore at that time **"it was difficult to understand what was done there freely and what under pressure"** – Metropolitan Laurus obviously is stretching the point. He, who for a number of years was Secretary to the Synod of Bishops, knows that when Patriarch Tikhon abolished the "Temporary Supreme Church Administration Abroad" – the hierarchs of the Church Abroad had no doubt then that this Ukase of the Patriarch was nothing **but a fulfillment of a demand of the Soviet government and due to pressure from her "representative" – the atheist Kharchev.** Not wishing to undermine the authority of the Patriarch, the Bishops Abroad resolved to close the "Temporary Supreme Church Administration" and immediately created instead the "Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad". The Patriarch never protested the new title of this very administrative center.

It is true that Metropolitan Anthony and Anastassy in the first years after the Revolution could not imagine that that nightmarish period of the Russian history would last for more than 80 years! This is why the resolutions of the first All-Russian Abroad Council of 1921 spoke of the monarchy and a continuation of the struggle against the Bolsheviks. St. John of Shanghai and Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko) a bit later no longer had such illusions. Although, in the 40's, Archbishop John himself was tempted by the Soviet propaganda of Metropolitan Nicholas Yarushevich and for a time commemorated the Moscow Patriarch. He even persuaded his flock to return to the USSR where the Church was supposedly free. In the Synod archives there used to be a letter of a woman who trusted in his suggestion, went to

Russia, where she has lost all her family, spent 10 years in a concentration camp and finally managed to escape to freedom.

Of all the hierarchs and clergy, the only one who did not recognize the MP was Archimandrite Philaret (Voznesensky) and who didn't share any such trust in the USSR and in Metropolitan Nicholas. He refused to serve molebens for those who were to go to their own ruin. For this, he barely escaped with his life: the house in which he resided was set on fire with the windows and doors boarded up.

It is striking that Metropolitan Laurus in all his public appearances and declarations – **never mentions the name of Metropolitan Philaret!** Is this not because Metropolitan Philaret categorically refused to recognize grace in the Moscow Patriarchate? In his 4 page letter to Archpriest Victor Potapov of July 9, 1980, he explained his position in detail, referring to the resolution of the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR of 1971, which would not recognize the election of Patriarch Pimen, as well as to the will and testament of Metropolitan Anastassy, who warned against relations with the MP even on the common social level! In this letter, Metropolitan Philaret (whose incorrupt relics in Holy Trinity monastery were, despite numerous pleas from the people present, again buried at the direction of Archbishop Laurus) – speaking of the MP Priest Dimitry Dudko wrote: “And it is within this very church of evildoers that the activities of Fr. Dimitry Dudko occurred, who has frankly declared in the press that he is not going to break with the Soviet church but will remain in her... Will someone dare to assert that the **Lord and His grace abide in the church of evil-doers, which lauds His demonized enemies and collaborated with them, which because of this is under a twofold anathema . . . ?**”

To the question regarding the matter of union of the Church Abroad and the MP: is opposition to the proposed process to be expected? – Metropolitan Laurus gives an amazingly evasive answer. He sums up everything by saying that supposedly many say they have no need of Russia, they have a different culture and their children long ago ceased being Russian and similar extensive supposedly expressed opinions.

In our archives we have 2 very thick folders of material received following the pre-conciliar All-Abroad clergy Conference and documents of the Council of Bishops in 2003. At the Conference in Nyack 150 clergymen and all of the 13 hierarchs of the ROCOR participated. We also have the official publications of the Diocesan Conferences: Eastern-American, Australian and German dioceses, also copies of various reports by several hierarchs and the distinguished clergymen as well as some private letters.

In not one of these documents are there **mentioned the objections pointed out by Metropolitan Laurus, except for the issue of Ecumenism!** For reasons he alone knows does he state that on the revival of the Russian state “**depends the fate of Christianity in the entire world, and in general the fate of the whole world**” – according to prophecies of St. Seraphim of Sarov!

There are many “prophecies” ascribed now to St. Seraphim. One could even read such nonsense as that before the end of the world, his monastery will flourish again and the Angels will take down the bells from the Ivan the Great bell tower in the Kremlin and will carry them to Sarov! Metropolitan Laurus cleverly does not quote the “prophecy” of St. Seraphim he refers to!

Metropolitan Laurus is also very concerned with the problem of “**isolation**”. In 1990 Archbishop Mark was also concerned with it, but in the era of Metropolitan Philaret he did not dare to raise this question officially.

It is amazing that Metropolitan Laurus hopes that the expected union of the ROCOR with the MP “**will contribute its own special and strong current!**” Is it realistic to believe that this might happen with the help of the mere 13 hierarchs of the Church Abroad (three of them invalids and Metropolitan Laurus himself is not in good health) against the Moscow Patriarchate's 150 bishops, the majority of whose Synod members are experienced KGB agents with many years of service?

The interview ends with him expressing the hope that “**Orthodox Russia will occupy her own place in the family of nations, and even possibly would restore the political and moral balance of the world!**” This is exactly what President Putin was hoping for when he met with the hierarchs Abroad in New York.

Upon studying the interview of Metropolitan Laurus, one has the impression that the monk Vsevolod (undoubtedly much more cultured and educated than his First Hierarch) has considerably polished up the Metropolitan's opinions, and probably added something of his own. Such expressions like “bez dumno” (unthinking) or “people of good will” are typical of people from the USSR, especially the latter expression which appeared in early 60's, when at the demand of the KGB the Moscow Patriarchate joined the World Council of Churches. Those who personally know Metropolitan Laurs probably will have serious doubts that these are his genuine phrases in this interview!

Unfortunately, Fr. Vsevolod does not conceal his pro-Moscow sympathies and in return, his articles and books are promoted in “Russkii Vestnik” (“Russian Herald”).

COLLISION OF TWO AGATHANGELS

The newspaper “Russkii Vestnik” in #7 (635) published a letter of Metropolitan Agathangel of Odessa and Ismail (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the MP) to Metropolitan Laurus regarding a complaint about ROCOR's Bishop Agathangel. The newspaper included 2 photographs: of Metropolitan Agathangel and of Metropolitan Laurus. Also the Internet agency Vertograd has published the same letter in their #449 issue of March 26th about the schismatic activities of ROCOR(L) Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky).

It starts with: “The Most Reverend Vladyka Metropolitan and the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad!

With special spiritual joy the Odessa diocese has received news about the start of the long-awaited dialogue between the ROC and the ROCOR, the two branches of the same Russian Orthodox Church. We await the arrival of Your Eminence for a meeting with His Holiness Patriarch Alexis with anticipation and we pray for the success of the initiated communication, which has to develop into unity in the Eucharist. (all emphasis by "Ch. N.") To this unity in Christ we have to come with mutual agreement and respect for one another. **I thank you, dear Vladyka, for my first appeal to you in connection with activities of Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky) that was examined at the ROCOR's Synod of Bishops meeting and the written explanation demanded from Pashkovsky about his activities. We hoped that after this examination by the Synod, the situation in the parishes of Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky) would result in the necessary conclusions on his part. However, Bishop Agathangel continues his unorthodox and non-canonical activity directed toward widening the existing separation.** The Odessa Diocese for many years has not participated in the Ecumenical Movement. Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky) is fully aware of this. But, is it possible to compare the evil of Ecumenism with the evil and damage which he brings with his blasphemous activity, serving the Divine Liturgy with those who are defrocked and suspended from serving..."

Then the MP Ukrainian Metropolitan Agathangel lists a number of particular cases of acceptance by Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky) of a number of clerics and then writes: "In the Epistle of the ROCOR Council of Bishops of 2003 there are these words: 'It is desirable that in places where there exist parishes of the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate that experiences of friendly coexistence would be developed.' As is obvious, Bishop Agathangel acts not toward the healing of our separation and the living embodiment of the Epistle of ROCOR's Council of Bishops, to which at present he belongs. By the practice of accepting runaway priests, who are defrocked and suspended, Pashkovsky strains our relationship and increases the separation. It seems that to such as Pashkovsky and those like him, very evidently the unity of the Russian Orthodoxy is not beneficial.

"I persuasively ask Your Eminence, the First Hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad to **stop** the insane actions of Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky) and take the necessary measures to cut short in the future similar anti-church actions, which ruin ecclesiastical discipline, recalling your words: 'The Russian Church Abroad always steadfastly observed the church canons, without reproaching those who step away from them' (Interview of March 15th, 2004)."

The letter is signed: 'With respectful love in Christ, Metropolitan of Odessa and Ismail, a permanent member of the Synod of Ukrainian Orthodox Church'.

This letter is proof of behind the scenes negotiations of the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus with the Moscow Patriarchate. Information from the Chancery of the ROCOR(L) Synod of Bishops about such a close relationship with the MP was never published on the Internet. Also unprecedented in the history of the ROCOR, is the fact that the Synod of Metropolitan Laurus felt it is possible to investigate the pretensions of the Moscow hierarch and even reprimand its own Bishop Agathangel because of complaints about him from the MP and to inform his Ukrainian namesake of it!

It seems the Ukrainian Metropolitan of the MP was quite upset by actions of Bishop Agathangel, because in his letter he refers to him a couple of times as simply Pashkovsky!

BETRAYAL OF PRINCIPLES DOES NOT GO UNREWARDED BY THE MP

The Internet agency "Forum 18" out of Oslo, Sweden, reported on April 21st that at present there are in Russia about 25 parishes under Metropolitan Laurus and about 50 under Metropolitan Vitaly. "Forum 18" never mentions the "jurisdiction" of Archbishop Lazarus. Considering that Metropolitan Valentin has 164 open parishes and about 200 catacomb communities – this means that there are in Russia more than 200 parishes and about 20 bishops who in no way recognize the MP. If they would unite, that would easily result in a substantial group, if not a movement. However, unfortunately in the early 1990's, Bishop Valentin complained to Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) about the intrigues of Archbishop Mark, who did his best provoke quarrels among them. This agency also reported that it got in touch with representatives of both "jurisdictions" in Russia. The representative of Metropolitan Vitaly's group, Bishop Victor (Pivovarov) as well as Priest Tikhon (Kazushin), complain that the authorities refuse to register their parishes, forbid assemblies of the clergy and even services in private homes. They have no rights to publish anything nor to conduct missionary activities only because they will not recognize the Moscow Patriarchate.

At the same time, the official representative of ROCA(L), Bishop Michael (Donskov), told the agency "Forum 18" that he always had good relations with the state authorities. He has "dismissed" previously documented difficulties encountered by the ROCA in Russia, and stated that "no administrator or religious affairs official has ever insulted me". And that the "mistakes" which occurred in the past were due to the fact that church members in Russia did not understand the legal procedures and state officials were not issued proper instructions on how to proceed (?!).

Also Bishop Yevtikhy (Kourochkin) declared that he noticed a positive change in his relations with the local regional authorities in Tymen since the New York Synod embarked upon dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate. "They have begun to be attentive and courteous toward us. This year they sent me Easter greetings for the first time ever, for example."

CUNNING AND DANGEROUS DECEPTION

We have received 2 issues of the newspaper "Pomestnyii Sobor" ("The Local Council") – an "official publication of the Sacred Synod of the Orthodox Russian Church (True Orthodox Church in Russia)" published "with the blessing of the Deputy Patriarch Metropolitan of Moscow and All Russia, Raphael".

After a brief survey of these two issues (March and April 2004) one might gain a favorable and serious impression about this, thus far unknown, hierarchy. However, the agency "Blagovest-Info" reports that this "Council" consists of 17 adventurers, headed by the so-called Metropolitan Raphael Prokopiev, who graduated from the military academy in Frunze, Kyrgyzstan, and retired with the rank of colonel. He taught reconnaissance tactics in the military institute where he fell under the influence of renown "healer" Kashpirovsky and started to practice this upon his students. In 1990 he established his own "Healing Center" and, according to his own admission, he received the "gift of healing" from his grandmother, who was practicing witchcraft.

According to this report, "the activists of this sect, self-styled under the name of TOC (True Orthodox Church), penetrated military camps, health organizations, and educational institutions. In Moscow they work with the morgues, pretending to be the Orthodox priests. These activities of these sectarians made the Minister for Education in Russian Federation, E.E. Chepurnykh, declare in writing letter #549/28-16 dated July 12th 2000 (without specifying where is the truth and where imitations) to include the 'True Orthodox Church' in the number of international totalitarian sects, such as 'Jehovah Witnesses' 'Aum Sinrike' and others.

In the April issue of this newspaper, on page 8, there are the photographs of 7 "metropolitans" and 11 "archbishops" and "bishops".

We have received information from the Suzdal Diocesan Administration that Raphael Prokopyev had the impudence to greet Metropolitan Valentin on the feast of Holy Pascha and to offer that he "positively respond to our common task in the restoration of our common Mother – The Orthodox Russian Church".

It is self-evident that the First Hierarchy of the Autonomous Russian Church, Metropolitan Valentin, has no plans to respond to this offer. We were also informed that about half of this "episcopate" once were members of the Suzdal diocese, but were expelled from it due to canonical and other transgressions!

MAY ONE PRAY FOR LENIN?

"The Ecumenical News International" of April 7th reported that one of the representatives of the Russian Church (MP) in Warsaw has suggested that the body of Lenin be removed from the Red Square and be buried according to the Orthodox rites.

Beginning in 1990 similar suggestions immediately created a number of contradicting rumors. Alexis II Ridiger has expressed himself as being against such plan, but not out of principle, but only because it might offend the feelings of citizens who are used to revering Lenin.

The Deputy to the Head (Metr. Kyrill Smolensky) of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, declared himself to be of the same spirit. He said that, "it is quite abnormal that a human body be displayed for public observation", however, "the decision regarding the future of Lenin's body is up to the state agencies, but in a way that would not create divisions in society".

Also, while agreeing that the display of Lenin's body "contradicts tradition and Russian culture" – Chaplin said that he would be ready to participate in Lenin's funeral "if the public wishes it".

According to the newspaper "NG/Religii" of March 17th, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy in the State Duma (Parliament) again raised the subject of Lenin's body.

The very same Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin has declared that the role of Lenin (an unprecedented persecutor of the Church) "in history was tragic enough, but the Church may pray for any baptized person, provided he was not excommunicated and Lenin was not excommunicated. [And what about the Patriarchal anathema against the Bolsheviks and their collaborators? "Ch. N."] If there were to be a request by the relatives, this will be examined."

It seems that the Patriarchal anathema does not disturb Chaplin, nor the fact that Lenin separated himself from the Church.

DEVASTATION OF KOSOVO

For several years in a row, before the eyes of the "civilized world" and an apathetic well-armed international army of 18,000 in Kosovo, there has gone on a campaign for the total destruction of Serbian churches and homes. In addition to units guarding this area, there are several thousand observers of the United Nations present, which are supposed to protect the Serbs from attacks upon them and their shrines by Albanian-Muslims in this cradle of Serbian culture. Many details about these crimes were published in the Internet agency "Forum 18".

Over the past few years no less than 112 churches were destroyed in Kosovo, among them those that were of international archeological value (such as churches from the 14th or 15th centuries) which were supposedly under the protection of the United Nations. This does not, however, keep the Albanians from publicly lying that only one church was destroyed, although there were some attempts to burn some!

Hundreds of thousands of Serbs were forced to leave their homes of many centuries and tens of thousands of them were set on fire! The Polish and German military units are most outrageous in their behavior. It is not known whether even a single Albanian has ever been arrested, although they commit these crimes right under the eyes of Western "protectors"!

This devastation has provoked a reaction from Serbs in Belgrade and several other important Serbian cities.

In Belgrade itself, in the middle of March, the only mosque there was set on fire. The outraged crowd of Serbs prevented firefighters from extinguishing the fire. The Metropolitan Amfilohije appealed to the crowd and the firefighters, begging them to "save what it is still possible to save" and the mosque was saved from total destruction.

A retired Muslim leader, Hamdija Ependi Jusufsphasic said: "It was a terrible day for all of us" and that he could not get inside the mosque. He also officially thanked Metropolitan Amfilohije for his intervention.

In contrast to the "protectors" of Kosovo, the Serbian government has arrested many of the participants who set fire to the mosques. In Belgrade alone 110 criminals were arrested, while, on orders from the Minister for Internal Affairs, Dragan Jovic, the Chief of Police and his Deputy were dismissed for their inactivity. At the same time, the Serbian government assured the Muslims that all the burned mosques will be restored at the government's expense.

FIRE IN SERBIAN MT. ATHOS MONASTERY HILANDAR

A newspaper of the Serbian Archdiocese in America, "The Path of Orthodoxy" in its April issued reported that at midnight on March 4th on Mt. Athos in the Serbian Monastery Hilandar there was a very fierce fire, which nearly destroyed this ancient monastery.

Out of 20 monasteries on Mt. Athos 17 are Greek and 3 are Slavic: St. Panteleimon's – Russian, Zographu – Bulgarian, and Hilandar – Serbian.

The fire destroyed the churches of St. Dimitrios (1778), St. Nicholas (14 and 17th centuries) and St. Sabba the Serbian (1778).

The living quarters of the Abbot of the Monastery were totally destroyed, as well as the dining room, kitchen and the recently restored quarters for pilgrims as well as a multitude of art objects, including ancient frescoes and mosaics.

The damage is estimated to be over 10 million dollars and to restore all of this will take several years.

It is believed that the fire started because of an electrical short circuit or a defective chimney.

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS: Letter of Bp. Gregory, presumably to Bp. Innocent of July 26/August 5th 1996

Your Grace, Dear Venerable Vladyko!

I am very grateful for the letter of July 16/29th. I was especially glad to receive it as a sign of your friendly disposition in comparison with some hierarchs who have stopped noticing me and, when at the Synod, do not feel it necessary to give me even a moment's glance. Of course, at present I can be of no use to them.

It is self-evident that with a new First Hierarch there are inevitable changes and, before they chased me away, I tried to adapt to him. In principle, I didn't think it would be difficult, until he demonstrated to me that my very presence was unpleasant to him, and when we had a confrontation in the matter of Fr. Nikita. That was a difficult problem for me with the late Metropolitan, but I never expected it would be even more difficult with the new one, since he himself has pointed out the harm he has done and has demanded he be removed. But when I suggested the Council's decision be carried out [that Fr. Nikita be expelled from the Synod building, "Ch. N."], the Metropolitan became very angry with me and on the contrary, became friendly with him and his friend the Archpriest Znosko, whom I seriously considered to be less than deserving of any trust. Certainly, the case of Fr. Anthony could interfere to a certain degree, but my disagreement was not so much with the Metropolitan, as with the Investigative Committee which was conducting the case in total disregard to the laws. I am sending you a copy of my declaration, which with the blessing of the Metropolitan, I have mailed to the hierarchs and the local clergy.

What I could never understand is the present practice to not even be interested in the history of a problem. The new Secretary [Archbp. Laurus, "Ch. N."] comes to the Synod once a month for a day or two, yet he never meets with me. He wished to talk with me only once, when Fr. Anthony joined the Greeks. And I was used to the practice that before one makes a certain decision in a case one has to study all the circumstances. Therefore, at the beginning I started to give the Metropolitan and the assistant to the Secretary some information, but I soon realized that it was of no interest to them and, rather, was displeasing and that they, the Metropolitan in particular, do not want to know what occurred earlier, but fire employees, without asking questions and without having any replacement for them. No one knows the proper procedures of church administration, and in particular those pertaining to this locale. Up to now, my daughter helped Bishop Hilarion in various matters quite a bit, but I am sure that when she leaves, no one will thank her, for example, for her unpaid work in organizing and working in the bookstore, which she is to hand over to whom ever. She has found herself a replacement who was also a secretary of another missionary activity – the theological courses. But the Metropolitan had him fired, also with no replacement and in this way buries the courses that had just started to thrive. "Well-wishers", supposedly repeating his words, tell me that he wants to annihilate everything that is any way connected with me. So be it; I am personally not offended, because I do not suffer from selfishness, but I am concerned with the practical aspect of this. Due to my age and state of my health, in any case the time was near for my retirement. I didn't

raise this question, considering the difficulty of finding replacements and the conviction that changes should be made gradually, so that the flock would see in changes not the condemnation of the predecessors, but the possibility of improvement and not decline. We made all former changes in a careful manner and the succession was preserved, despite the big differences between former First Hierarchs. I try to calm those who are worried about me and are concerned for me, but I am afraid that a sort of opposition is starting up which might become obvious when Fr. Nikita returns, who, as I am told, just waits for my departure and then will have the leadership in the cathedral parish.

I will tell you frankly Vladyko: I could easily deal with my removal from the administration if I could see some sort of replacement. But when I see only the declines and the removal of honest employees with no replacements for them, I understand that with my departure the Synod cathedral and the whole center might be handed over to the hands of Fr. Nikita, against the decision of the Council of Bishops – I feel grieved and worried. In general, I am afraid that none of our hierarchs realize what kind of trouble is brewing in our center. I understand that you are concerned about the reduction in numbers of the flock, which we too have noticed, but there are also very lively and growing parishes, in particular around Boston and in Pennsylvania. By the way, the latter wanted me to remain their diocesan bishop, but this didn't agree with the desire of the authorities to get rid of me, even if I were far from New York.

I will try to help in France. At present I am busy with the biography of Metropolitan Anthony and with preparations for the publication of his letters. The latter is a difficult matter because of his handwriting especially during his last years. My daughter helps me in this, but it is a difficult and laborious task.

I still have to finish some problems regarding my health, by using my good insurance policy. I believe I will be done by the feast of Dormition. I just now received a visa for residence in France.

Once more I thank you Vladyko, for your friendly letter and ask for your holy prayers.

Your devoted brother in Christ + Bishop Gregory

From the editors: The collected letters of Metropolitan Anthony was published by Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville in 1988. However, shortly after it was published, it was removed from the monastery's bookshelves. As we later learned, this was done on orders from Archbishop Anthony (Medvedev) of San Francisco because Metropolitan Anthony praised Count Y. Grabbe (aka Bp. Gregory) too much in his letters!

Letter to Nicholas P. Churilov of August 12/25 the 1993

Dear Nikolai Pavlovich!

Unfortunately in our center there was a mix up and rumors spread which might be very confusing. At present, Vladyka Laurus is still in Russia, where he went in order to set up there a book selling representative for Jordanville, as well as to gather some contradictory information. The latter is my fault, because I have raised a ruckus, since some indisputably hostile sources there were taken as truthful by us, which were targeting the destruction of the rather solid foundation of our Church in Russia. At the price of some personal annoyance, more than 60 of our parishes, headed by the slandered Bishop Valentin, were saved.

The former KGB continues to work in the church affairs of the Patriarchate and even uses not only slander, but also members of Revolutionary paramilitary groups who attack our parishes. A newspaper even published that Bishop Valentin had returned to the Patriarchate, which is totally without foundation. I hope that Vladyka Laurus will be able to straighten out some unclear matters.

At present, in the Patriarchate there is the heresy of Ecumenism, but Metropolitan Sergius was not participant in it. It was introduced by the KGB some time after his death.

Recently on the inter-religious front activity toward union of all religions has become very lively and the Catholics were formally involved in it. The Constantinople Patriarch is especially active in this and is pressuring the Jerusalem Patriarch, who does not agree with him.

Next Sunday I will be attending a family celebration at the Shishkoff's, but having no transportation, I probably will not be able to meet with you.

May the Lord's blessing be with you. Sincerely yours with love in Christ + Bishop Gregory