



CHURCH NEWS

An Independent Publication of Orthodox Opinion

MARCH, 2005

Vol. 16, No. 3 (# 138)

Supported by the voluntary contributions of its readers.
Republication is permitted upon acknowledgment of source.

CONTENTS:

LENTEN EPISTLE OF METR. VALENTIN

TWO NEW CLERGY IN AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

DEATH AND FUNERAL OF ABBOT GERASIM (ROMANOV)

UNPRECEDENTED GREETING

ABOUT THE JOINT COMMITTEES FOR RAPPROCHEMENT OF ROCOR(L) AND MP

EXTRACTS FROM VERBATIM REPORTS ON RELICS IN RUSSIA OF GRAND DUCHESS ELISABETH AND NUN
BARBARA

RECEPTION OF AN IMPOSTER IN SAN FRANCISCO

ANGLICANS AND HOMOSEXUALS

ABOUT "VALENTINE'S DAY"

THE PHYSICIAN AND RELIGION

MORALS SCANDAL IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM DOES NOT DIE DOWN

WIDE SPREAD SCANDAL IN GREEK CHURCH

CONCELEBRATION OF "ORTHODOX" ANTIOCHIAN PATRIARCH AND HEAD OF UNIATE-MELKITES

DUTCH THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE WILL TRAIN IMAMS

LATEST ABOUT THE TEMPLE MOUNT

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

CHURCH NEWS

639 Center St.

Oradell, NJ 07649

Tel./Fax (201) 967-7684

E-mail: churchnews@optonline.net

LENTEN EPISTLE

Of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox autonomous Church
His Eminence **Valentin**, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir
To all of our Fathers, honorable monastics, and God-fearing flock of the Church of God

"O Lord and Master of my life... grant me to see sins and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages". (St. Ephraim the Syrian)

For our holy Orthodox Church, the time for Great Lent is drawing near. This is a most salvific season, when we are called to "fight the good fight, and run the race of the Fast." This "good fight" is really a call to show forth love, which in and of itself, appears as a ray, emanating from the Kingdom of God, and whose property it is to overcome all of the restrictions and conventions of this world. Love's driving force is from God, or even more accurately, as in the words of the beloved disciple of the Lord, the holy Apostle John the Theologian, "God is love".

The success of our soul-saving labors, to which we are fully determined to dedicate ourselves during these holy days, depends upon the softening of our hearts through the recognition of our sinfulness: "grant me to see mine own sins and not to judge my brother." This is the prayer that we will be saying many times each day during the entire course of Great Lent.

Christ's Holy Church prepares us ahead of time for these labors, beginning with the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, calling us to wholeheartedly pray along with the publican repeating his penitential cry: "O God, be merciful unto me a sinner!" Under no circumstances should anyone, in imitation of the Pharisee, dare to hope in his own seeming righteousness, or in his own good deeds, but should place all of his hope in the Lord.

The Lord praised the Publican not only for having recognized his sinfulness, but even more so for the remorse that he felt for having committed the sins that he did, for his desire to be freed from them, and for having a firm resolve to correct himself.

The Holy Church reminds us that no matter how low we may have fallen, no matter what sins we may have committed, if we but turn to the Lord in humility and with a feeling of repentance and say: "O Lord, we are not worthy to call Thee God, our Father; but receive us one of Thy hired servants," we shall again find hope for our salvation. Let us, therefore, hold these holy days in reverence. They prepare us to take part in the terrible Passion of the Lord and His Resurrection on the third day. Let us especially take care to repent of those sins of which we are most ashamed or have forgotten to confess over the years.

Each one of us has received the gift and grace of Christ's love through Baptism, or through one or another of the sacraments of the Church. We know that in this world of ours, there are those who are hungry and sick, those who are suffering and are heavy-laden, and who have been left wanting of our charity. Do we always have in mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He spoke about the Last Judgment: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me?" No matter how narrow and limited in its capabilities our own existence might be, each one of us bears a certain responsibility for holding a tiny particle of the Kingdom of Heaven, for it is precisely for this reason that we possess this gift of the love of Christ. Therefore, we shall be judged on whether we have accepted this responsibility, and on whether we behaved charitably or neglected to do so. For "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

We rarely, very rarely, recall the Gospel narrative about the Last Judgment when the Lord will separate the sheep from the goats, i.e. sinners from the righteous, and will pronounce the final sentence. Then, will our fates be decided for all eternity. Then, our evil deeds, which we have committed upon this perishable earth, will be made known to all mankind. Do we seriously consider the possibility that, when the Lord says in the presence of His Angels and Saints: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into the eternal flame, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth," we might be in the number of those whom He thus addresses?

It is not our meek and humble Lord who will then be deserving of blame for passing such a terrible sentence. No! For the Lord is long-suffering, much-merciful, and desires nothing but eternal salvation for all of us! It is our own deeds that will either condemn or commend us, and will place us upon the path leading either to eternal suffering or to eternal bliss! And again, the Lord has warned us: "As I find you, so shall I judge you." No one knows the day or the hour when death shall find him. For this reason, we must always, continuously, watch and pray, and live in such a way as if each day were our last.

At the Last Judgment, it will be only those who have learned to show charity to their fellow man, not only in word, but in deed as well, those who visited the sick, who fed the hungry, who gave drink to the thirsty, and who wiped the tears away from the faces of injured, that will receive a blessing and salvation.

The Apostle Paul says, "the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, compassion, faith, meekness, moderation." And the holy Evangelist John the Theologian, speaking to all of us, says, "Children, love ye one another!" In this precept, all the commandments of Christ, and the entire testament of the Gospel, are contained.

Let us ever be in remembrance of the prodigal son, who received forgiveness, of the repentant harlot, who received salvation, and of the good thief, who was accounted worthy to enter into paradise together with Christ. Let us forever remember that it was repentance that led to the return of the Apostle Peter, who thrice denied Christ, his divine

Teacher, and to his being chosen to be one of the first to see the risen Christ, Who gave him the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

I call God's blessing down upon you all, that you might be able to spend these divine days of Great Lent in purity and in constant prayer, and I wholeheartedly wish you all Godspeed and the salvation of your souls!

Lowly, **Valentin**
Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir
Great Lent, 2005 Suzdal

TWO NEW CLERGY IN AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

According to the Internet publication in English #12 Of February 24th, a clergyman of the Nizhni Novgorod diocese of the MP, Priest-monk Daniel (Elkind) on February 9th was received by the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church.

He was born in St. Petersburg in 1969 and eventually entered the St. Nicholas Verkhoturk Monastery in the Yekaterinburg diocese, where he was tonsured and ordained a deacon and hieromonk. In 2003 he has completed his studies in the Nizhni Novgorod seminary.

"Vertograd" in the Russian version #508 reported that on February 21st to Suzdal came from the USA three archpriests of the Autonomous Russian Church: Protopresbyter Victor Melekhov, Archpriest Spiridon Schneider and Archpriest Dionisy McGowen. On the next day 8 priests concelebrated with Metropolitan Valentin, including "the newly joined clergyman of the Tula diocese. This is already the third priest who has joined the ROAC from the MP during February of this year".

On February 22nd, Metropolitan Valentin ordained in the Tsar-Constantine Cathedral in Suzdal Priest Siluan (Silvio Ergasto) Dignac, who was born in 1975 in Buenos Aires (Argentina). He was raised a Catholic, although his maternal grand-mother was Orthodox.

Beginning at age 20, in 1990 he helped Bishop Alexander (Mileant), of the ROCOR(L) jurisdiction, to organize Internet Orthodox courses in the Spanish language.

In March 2004 Fr. Siluan and his presbytera were received into Autonomous Russian Church by former Bishop Gregory of Denver, who commissioned him to organize an Orthodox Mission in South America. When the latter went into schism, Fr. Siluan and members of the mission established by him remained faithful to the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church.

DEATH AND FUNERAL OF ABBOT GERASIM (ROMANOV)

During the night of Monday to Tuesday of February 22nd 2005, in the house of Fr. Vladimir Shishkoff, his friend and schoolmate in the cadet corps Father Gerasim (Romanov) died.

Fr. Gerasim, (in the world Leonid) was born 1928 in Paris, and in 1946 joined the brotherhood of St. Job of Pochaev. In 1949 he was tonsured a monk by Archbishop Vitaly (Maximenko)

After being ordained a priest, Fr. Gerasim served in Teheran, Eastern Europe, Berlin, Chicago, Eastern American dioceses and in Jerusalem, In all places of his ministry, he was beloved and respected by his flock.

After becoming seriously ill in 1973, Fr. Gerasim lived with the support and help of Fr. V. Shishkoff and his Matushka. After his first illness some others started and during his last days, Fr. Gerasim had to live with a throat tube for breathing and a feeding tube with fluids, directly into his stomach.

A short time before he died he received Holy Communion and the special prayers for the departure of the soul were read at his bedside.

All the procedures, connected with his repose were performed by Holy Trinity Monastery of Jordanville, NY, since he was originally their monk and badly wanted to be buried there.

The funeral service was presided over by Metropolitan Laurus, with participation of clergy and seminarians of the Monastery. Metropolitan Laurus expressed his gratitude to Fr. Vladimir and his wife for taking care of Fr. Gerasim for several decades.

Since Fr. Vladimir no longer belongs to the Church Abroad, but is a clergyman of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church under Metropolitan Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir, quite naturally he could not participate in the funeral service of his former friend and the comrade, although he was present in the church.

Fr. Gerasim was distinguished by his wonderful humility and peaceful character and because of this, when he became seriously ill, so that his repose was to be expected, many of his former friends and parishioners called even from abroad, to find out how he was doing, and sister Marina (Chertkoff), who knew him from his residing in France, even came from Jerusalem to see him before he died.

UNPRECEDENTED GREETING

For the first time in its 85 year long history, the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Metropolitan Laurus, congratulated the Moscow Patriarch Alexis (code name in the KGB "Drozdov") for his name's day!

The information agency "Portal Credo.ru" has published on February 25th, 2005 the following text of this greeting:

To His Holiness Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis

Your Holiness, most Holy Vladyko!

With a feeling of spiritual joy I greet you on your name's day! May your labors for the health, spiritual revival and unification of our Russian God-protected people be blessed.

I prayerfully wish you many mercies and heavenly aid in fulfilling your high ministry and may it serve to God's glory and the flourishing in Christ's faith of all Russian Orthodox people.

With brotherly love in the Lord

+ Metropolitan Laurus, First Hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad

February 12/25th, 2005

It is worth noticing, that this greeting was published in Russia and not in America!

ABOUT THE JOINT COMMITTEES FOR RAPPROCHEMENT OF ROCOR(L) AND MP

The Internet site of the ROCOR(L) Chancery reported on March 2nd, that Archpriest Alexander Lebedev, the rector of a parish in Los Angeles, CA and also the Secretary to the Committee for rapprochement with the MP, on February 27th met with the students of the Moscow ecclesiastical schools. Present at this meeting was the Dean of the Moscow Theological Academy, Archbishop Eugene of Vereisk and the academy's administration.

Archpriest Lebedev acquainted the students with his own biography, as being typical of the life of the clergy abroad.

From this publication, but of February 28th, we find out that "On Tuesday, March 1st, there will be held the 4th joint meeting of the Committee of the ROCOR and the MP, which will be held in Paris. As usual, participating for the ROCOR will be the President of the Committee for the Moscow Patriarchate, Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany and members: Bishop of Ishima and Siberia Yevtikhy and of Vevey – Ambrose, Archimandrite Luke (Murianka), the Secretary of Committee Archpriest Alexander Lebedev and Archpriest Nicholas Artemov".

The Internet Agency "Portal CREDO.RU" in its publication of March 2nd reported some details about this meeting, not mentioned in the Synod's news. From this we learn that a "responsible employee of the Department for External Relations of the MP, Rev. Nicholas Balashov" has revealed that "At today's meeting again there would be discussed the matters, connected to the status of the Church Abroad as a self-governing part of the one Local [Russian] Church and the canonical conditions for the restoration of complete communion" (Underlined by "Ch. N.").

According to him, the discussion will also include "the problems, connected with the clergymen within the Church Abroad who were ordained in the Moscow Patriarchate". Then in the brackets it is explained that by this are meant the "deserters from the ends of the 80's and beginning of the 90's, whose status, because of the prospective reunification (?) is more than uncertain, and also the matter of the structures set up in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church".

One can believe that the future fate of the "deserting clergy" – is not to be envied! After all, a majority of them have (with very few exceptions, as for example Archpriest Vassily Fonchenkov in the German diocese, who had the KGB code name of "Friend") – have left the Moscow Patriarchate because they believed in the correctness of the positions of the Church Abroad. The "Friend" of Archbishop Mark was serving in Salzburg and Filla in Austria. According to the latest information, he returned to Moscow in 2004 and again works in the External Relations Dept. of the MP, where almost all the employees are also KGB agents! But these were, so to say, exceptional cases.

The matter will also be complicated by how to interpret the term of "canonical territory". Besides, after the Revolution in 1917, numerous parishes were established abroad and built churches for them – while the Moscow Patriarchate in 1930's formally and officially gave up all property of the Russian Church outside of Russia. However, as soon as the Israeli government was established, the MP immediately sent to Jerusalem the "Ecclesiastical Mission of the Moscow Patriarchate" and in early 80's "reestablished the historical Orthodox Palestine Society"!

Almost simultaneously with the Portal CREDO.RU, also the "Vertograd" agency of March 1st in its issue #508 reported that in view of the approaching meetings of the Rapprochement Committees in Paris – the President of the Department of the External Relations of the MP, Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk received Archpriest Alexander Lebedev, the Secretary of the Committee for the ROCOR. At this meeting was also present Archpriest Nicholas Balashov, a Secretary of the MP Committee for Dialogue with the ROCOR.

During this meeting were "discussed matters connected with the future activities of the committees". During the conversation also touched on the theme of "witnessing to the spiritual values of the Orthodox tradition facing the heterodox world".

What this means – one can only guess!

EXTRACTS FROM VERBATIM REPORTS ON RELICS IN RUSSIA OF GRAND DUCHESS ELISABETH AND NUN BARBARA

The Chancery of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR(L) on March 4th published 14 pages of a verbatim report of the press conference in connection with the agreement between the ROCOR and the MP that the relics of the Grand Duchess Elisabeth and Nun Barbara are to be returned to Jerusalem.

Certainly, the size of our publication does now allow us to reproduce this in its entirety, but we will give the most important extracts from this report.

At the press conference, besides a number of the organizers of this event and a multitude of journalists, was present also the vicar bishop of the Moscow diocese, Alexander Bishop of Dmitrovsk and a Bishop of the Church Abroad, Michael of Boston, who was the constant escort of the chest containing the holy relics.

Bishop Michael visited 71 dioceses in 140 cities in Russia and it is estimated that no less than 10 million people have venerated the relics. This conclusion was reached from the number of icons of the New Martyrs distributed at melebens served before the relics.

The press conference opened with a speech by MP Bishop Alexander, then Bishop Michael responded to it with a long speech, and said among other things: "Vladyko Alexander, I thank you for your love, your trust, and for our communications. We argued very little, because we found between us a common language; this happened as well with the other bishops in all the various dioceses. Although we have been separated for a long time it seemed as if we, being in the Church, became acquainted long ago, but in fact it seems that we are much closer to each other than we imagined".

The president of the "St. Andrew, the First called Apostle Foundation", Mr. Alexander V. Melnik, who thanked for bringing the relics of the New Martyrs to Russia reported that "On February 28th we are leaving for Jerusalem, in order to return the relics to the place where they belong and will be kept". However, "maybe our dream, as we heard from Vladyka, might come true. There is an preliminary decision by the Synod of Bishops of the Church Abroad that when the restoration of the St. Martha and Maria Convent is finished it will be possible to transfer the relic pieces to the Russian territory into the St. Martha and Maria Convent which is located in the Big Ordynka, just opposite our Fund".

Then Mr. Melnik said: "We will have to come up with some new actions. When the relics were brought into the Christ the Savior's Cathedral, Vladyka Michael look at me and could I see a question in his eyes: "what next we are going to do together?" To this Bishop Michael responded: It is necessary to continue our communications. Because before our own eyes a new dynamic has been manifest, of quite a different character, which is more important for the concept of what is ecclesiastical and what we understand as being conciliar. [sobornost, "Ch. N."]. **The church's communication is evident not only in canonical regulations, but also in common prayer**"...(?!)

What does a doctor's assistant understand of anything about the canons and the prayerful communion in the Church?

One of the employees of the publication RIA "Novost" ("News") asked:

"Vladyka Michael, can you state that the processions with the relics of Grand-duchess Elisabeth and Nun Barbara over the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church really has speeded up the beginning of the rapprochement process with the Moscow Patriarchate".

To this Bishop Michael has replied: "Maybe this expression 'rapprochement' is a bit too formal, a word not fitting the Church, because the Church always was one (?!). That is, the Russian Church Abroad has always considered herself to part of the Russian Orthodox Church. We belong to the one same Body – the Body of the Church. And if to talk about the rapprochement, this is the rapprochement of people and their spiritual rapprochement. Quite a few people even didn't know of the existence of the Church Abroad, of course, I do not mean clergy. But, for example, if someone was going abroad, he could be baptized by us and receive Communion".

Another reporter, from ITAR-TASS questioned Bishop Michael being interested when precisely the relic pieces of the New Martyrs would be handed over to the Martha-Maria Convent?

Bishop Michel replied: "As soon as the Martha-Maria Convent restoration is declared, we will completely hand over this small chest, which is sacred by itself, because it is made from the boards of the coffins, in which the bodies of Grand duchess Elisabeth and Nun Barbara were transported from Peking to the Gethsemane. These were already the new coffins, made from the Chinese tick. In the center of the chest there is a silver cross, and under it soil from Darmstadt, where the Grand Duchess Elisabeth was born, from the Holy Land of Gethsemane, where her relics rest and from Alapayevsk, where she accepted a martyr's crown. On the lid is the enamel medallion of Christ the Savior Not Made by Hands, which was found among the relics of the righteous New-Martyr Elisabeth. It was a gift given her by the Tsar Martyr Nicholas II, on the day she became Orthodox. Therefore, not only the relics themselves and the ribs found on both sides of the cross, but the chest itself is sacred".

From this exchange of pleasantries on both sides it is without doubt that this was just one of the diplomatic steps on part of the Moscow Patriarchate in order to create personal relations which eventually will be very helpful in future negotiations.

RECEPTION OF AN IMPOSTER IN SAN FRANCISCO

As per the Internet information of ROCOR(L) Synod of Bishops, of February 28th on February 26th there was brought to the cathedral of San Francisco the icon of St. John of Tobolsk with of his relic part, as a gift of the Tobolsk-Tumen diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The initiative for this event came from Metropolitan Cyril of Smolensk (Gundiayev), the President of the Department for External Relations, who in the KGB had the code name of "Mikhailov".

From this information it is obvious that at the 10th anniversary of the glorification of St. John of Shanghai (it is not mentioned on whose initiative) in San Francisco the icon painted of St. John of Shanghai which contains a particle of his relics, with the aim that eventually this icon will be handed over to Tobolsk in Russia.

The executer of this idea will be the widow of the nephew of the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas – Mrs. Olga N. "Kulikovsky-Romanoff" and she will bring the icon of St. John of Shanghai to Tobolsk. She, herself lives in Canada.

This person has been visiting Russia for some time and exploiting the monarchist feelings of many Russians, but only after the death of her husband (the son of Grand Duchess Olga, the sister of Tsar Nicholas) took upon herself the name of Kulikovsky-Romanoff: she responds to the title of princess. Once it was printed in a Russian Newspaper that she is even a "Grand Duchess".

The Grand Duchess Olga, was married for the first time to Prince of Oldenburg, whom she divorced and later married an aide-de-camp of her former husband, Officer Kulikovsky. Emperor Nicholas II did not give his sister any other last name. She herself and her two sons Tikhon and Gury, according to law, were plain Kulikovskys.

It is interesting that at the present time, when speaking of the "royal persons" contemporary Russians have forgotten that the last name of "Romanoff" in mentioning their first names was never used. Sometimes it is possible to read now in the Russian newspapers that even the Empress is called Alexandra Feodorovna Romanoff!

The arrival of the icon, brought by Mrs. Kulikovsky was organized with a great deal of festivity. The icon was met by Archbishop Cyril and all the clergy and it will be permanently placed in the cathedra, where relics of St. John of Shanghai (Maximovich), a descendant of St. John of Tobolsk, also Maximovich are resting.

According to San Francisco tradition, there was served a moleben to the two St. Johns.

The festivities were especially big because on this day the name's day of Archbishop Cyril and also his 50th birthday were observed. Because of such celebrations connected with Archbishop Cyril, he as manager of the St. Cyril and Methodius Gymnasium received a gift of... "50 balloons which he gave to the students of the lower grades of the gymnasium".

An amazing and not a traditional gift to a monk, and let alone – an archbishop!

After being treated to a lunch, arranged by the sisterhood for all present, in one of the cathedral's halls, Mrs. Kulikovsky gave a report about the life and miracles of St. John of Tobolsk.

After the report, the people present were able to ask her some questions. In particular, there was a question about the transference of the coffin of Empress Maria Feodorovna from Denmark to Petersburg in order to have it buried next to her husband, Emperor Alexander the III. Olga N. Kulikovsky answered that her late husband Tikhon was categorically against this project of bringing the coffin to Russia, because this is not a church, but a museum in which services very seldom held.

ANGLICANS AND HOMOSEXUALS

The newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of March 4th reports that the Church of England on February 17th gave its full backing to the Windsor Report in which it is stressed that the ordination of an open homosexual bishop in America has contributed to a very serious split among the Anglicans.

At the same time, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams has announced that the search for peace will be very costly. He called for all to remember that in the "Christian Church" there are moments when risky decisions are made, for example during the Reformation, more recently, about ordaining women to the priesthood.

"The trouble is that risk really is risk", said Williams. "You don't and you can't know yet whether it is justified. The church is capable of error and any local church is capable of error. Hence when one portion of the church decided it must take a conscientious risk there were inevitable results" in the form of misunderstanding, rupture and damage.

The article about the "Windsor Report" reports that this report has examined the aftermath of Robinson's ordination in America and "urged the Episcopal Church to express regret". But, although the liberals have apologized, they continued to insist that in supporting Robinson, they were just defending the principle of equality.

At the same time, the protesting conservatives have announced that they no longer will make offerings to their churches.

The Canterbury Archbishop Williams has said that the church is facing "very difficult decisions" and that the outcome from this situation "would not be cost-free.... It may be for the church to take a firm stand against the erosion of objective morality and biblical truth".

ABOUT "VALENTINE'S DAY"

Some American holidays, one must think because of commercial considerations, have started to be observed also in some European countries. Among others, during Western Christmas there is practiced a parody of the deeply venerated Miracle Worker St. Nicholas, called "Santa Claus", and there is Halloween and Valentine's day, which became in the USA a day of lovers.

Businesses on these days make millions of dollars, selling greeting cards, flowers and candies, packed in red boxes in shape of hearts. All this has nothing to do with St. Valentine, a 4th century martyr, who suffered for Christ's sake. This holy martyr spoke a lot about his love for Jesus Christ and not about human love toward various people.

The official publication of the Serbian Patriarchate "Pravoslavlje" ("Orthodoxy") for February published a short article entitled "Thoughts Regarding the Holiday of St. Valentine" which is observed in the West on February 14th. In the article it is said that "Today is one more of the secular 'holidays,' the Day of Love, when the person feels that there is something out of order... All the town is decorated with red roses, funny looking fat white figures, which supposed to depict angels with bow and arrows... The radio programs keep reminding one all the time that today is St. Valentine's day, the day of love...."

"The next day all this will be sold for half price, in order to later make room for pastel colored rabbits and chickens, which present a caricature of the great feast of Christ's Resurrection."

The critique of "Valentine's Day" by the Serbian Patriarchate is joined also by the newspaper "Russkii Vestnik" (Russian Herald) #4(658) in a note signed by "Russian Line".

"The feast, directed toward converting intimate feelings into a general and public act, exploits the most lowly feelings and misinterprets the real concept of love, it is stated in the document, prepared by the employees of MGPU and Moscow's education department".

"...The authors believe, says the document, that the 'day of those fallen in love' was artificially thrust upon Russian society, without any roots in the culture of Russian or any other nationalities in Russia".

It is amazing that in the Russian newspaper this "holiday" is called "the day of St. Valentine" while it has nothing to do with this Saint, and in the USA it is simply called "Valentine's day".

THE PHYSICIAN AND RELIGION

The New York Times of March 10th reported that the renown physician Dr. Charles Towns was awarded the Templeton Prize in the amount of \$1.5 million for his researches in the "spiritual matters".

Dr. Towns, 89 years old, was for a number of years a professor at the University of California in Berkley, and taught that between science and religion there is a lot in common and that the time will come when they would become not antagonists, but collaborators.

This professor has several published works on theme of "Convergence and Religion".

Dr. Towns considers himself to be a Protestant Christian, however he has declared that there is no reason to believe that everything in the Bible is correct.

Asked about his feeling toward Christ the Savior, this "Christian" replied: "I have tremendous respect and adoration for Christ and what He did", but he added that he didn't know whether Christ actually was the Son of God. However, in his opinion, "He is closer to it than anybody else I know of".

Considering the advanced age of this scientist, it is without a doubt that in a very short while he will find out first hand if Christ the Savior is truly the Son of God!

MORALS SCANDAL IN ROMAN CATHOLICISM DOES NOT DIE DOWN

A secular press for nearly three years continues to complain about the low level of the Catholic clergy, (specially in America) which has brought out the spiritual and moral crisis within this confession.

According to the New York Times of February 19th, the Catholics have in the USA 195 dioceses and a majority of them have on their own organized some investigating committees

Despite this, the Pope had to take some measures against the pedophile priests and even to create some lay organizations, which examine the official complaints about the clergy.

Kathleen McChesney, executive director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection in USA, has reported to the "USA Conference of Catholic Bishops" that the majority of complaints which were made against 756 clergymen are of 30 years duration. However, 22 complaints made by the children, are dated 2004 and immediately were forwarded to the police.

In 2002 her office has received 1,092 complains, mainly on the part of men. All this has brought enormous monetary litigations and it is believed that so far the Catholic Church has paid out in compensation to the victims of their clergy the astronomical amount of already more than a billion dollars.

Some Catholic dioceses have already declared bankruptcy; many are selling their churches and religious schools. Just a week ago it was announced in the TV news that 26 Catholic schools in New Jersey are closing their doors!

The magazine, "U. S. News & World Report" of January 5th also devoted 2 pages to this subject. According to this magazine, in the Boston diocese (where the very first sensational scandal occurred) more than 80 churches are to be closed and the diocese has annually 10 million less in income, because parishioners have reduced their donations. 20 more dioceses have already paid to their victims enormous amounts of money in out of court settlements.

It seems that the Los Angeles diocese will suffer the most, because now 544 persons are suing and the estimated amount of this litigation is expected to be no less than 1 billion dollars.

All this scandal has resulted also in a considerable shortage of clergy. The dioceses were forced to remove 700 of their clergy and the general number of clergy from year 1956 to present is 15,328 less! In the current year there were ordained only 533 priests, one half less than in 1956.

The weekly attendance of the churches has also dropped from 52% to 35%!

The Catholic organizations created to fight the amorality believe that at present their main task is to restore the trust and respect of the laity toward the Catholic Church.

WIDE SPREAD SCANDAL IN GREEK CHURCH

A Greek-English newspaper "The National Herald" of February 12th has reported a widely developing crisis within the Greek Athens' Church, presided over by Archbishop Christodulos, who is much less a modernist than Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

The scandal started with conviction and jailing of Aarchimandrite Iakovos Yiosakis who was accused of stealing and selling antique rarities. In the course of the investigation it became known that a number of other renowned clerics have participated. The accusations became so spread among the faithful, that Archbishop Christodulos had to make a public declaration regarding this matter, warning his flock that he will take very strict measures to stop the crimes and even asked the faithful to report to him any similar violations of the laws.

Meanwhile, the Athens' Synod has suspended Metropolitan Panteleimon of Attica for six months, after his telephone conversation with a lawyer and a judge was made public in which he tried to secure their support in the litigation with some monastery unnamed in the papers. This punishment is considered to be the most severe over the last two decades. Metropolitan Panteleimon reacted to this by pledging that he would be "taking others with him to the depths of Hades".

Metropolitan Panteleimon was accused of homosexuality and embezzlement of Church funds for his personal use. He has also threatened that if he were tried, he will create an "earthquake" by involving 102 more bishops with similar accusations!

The Synod has also appointed an investigating committee of three bishops who are to check into the financial affairs of the Attica diocese. The investigation started about two Metropolitans (Panteleimon of Attica and Dyonissy of Hios) began at the demand of the government authorities. The government has discovered that these Metropolitans have up to 7 million euros in Swiss banks. The spokesman for the Athens' Church of Greece Epiphanius Economou has stated that "This is undoubtedly the worst crisis we have faced in decades, but we are determined to act quickly and decisively. Our top priority at this time is to restore the people's faith and trust in the Church". Under investigation are three more metropolitans.

According to the agency "Portal CREDO.RU" of April 28th, influenced by the media, many started to demand the resignation of Archbishop Christodulos, who, however has refused to retire and has declared: "I am not the part of the problem, but a person who is called to resolve it".

CONCELEBRATION OF "ORTHODOX" ANTIOCHIAN PATRIARCH AND HEAD OF UNIATE-MELKITES

The Internet agency "Vertograd" # 507 of February 23rd, 2005 in the suburb of Damascus there was a concelebration of "Orthodox" Antiochian Patriarch Ignatius Hazim with the head of the "Greek-Catholic Melkite Church" (this is the term for the Syrian Uniates) "Patriarch Gregory III Laham" at the consecration of St. Peter and Paul Church. This event happened on February 4th.

In his sermon the Syrian heretic Gregory said: "This event is a starting point for the unification of the Antiochian Church within the bonds of national unity of Syria".

In a responding speech the Patriarch Ignatius IV stressed that "the consecration of the common Orthodox-Melkite church is an outstanding event, which plays an important role in the building of national unity which is extremely necessary in the present situation" (Underlined by "Ch. N.") .

This temple will be used by "both jurisdictions" – the ones who are officially called Orthodox and the Monophysite-uniate heretics.

The Antiochian Church, which a long time ago was Orthodox, long ago started down the path of unrestrained modernism, although, not a single one of the similar "Orthodox" patriarchates (including Moscow) has severed the prayerful communion with her, thereby violating the 10th Apostolic Canon: "If anyone shall pray, even in private house with an excommunicated person, let him also be excommunicated".

DUTCH THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTE WILL TRAIN IMAMS

The bulletin "Ecumenical News international" of February 4th has reported that Amsterdam's theological institute, which until the present was considered a "bastion of the Protestant theology" became the very first higher education establishment in Holland which will get a state grant in order to train Muslim imams (clergy)!

The so-called "Free University of Amsterdam" on February 2nd announced that it will receive 1.5 million euros (\$1,950,000) to establish a fund for higher level training of Muslim clergy.

As the statement says: "The course is to prepare students so they can get to work in careers that require theological formation, such as pastoral care in the armed forces, the health sector, judicial institutions and mosques".

It is believed that at present of Holland's 16.3 million citizens, 4.4% are Muslim, 31% Catholic and 21% Protestant.

The Project to train imams is seen as an attempt to improve the integration of Muslims into Dutch society.

LATEST ABOUT THE TEMPLE MOUNT

Newspaper "The Jewish Press" on March 4th published an extensive article about the possibility of visiting the "Temple Mount" on which a long time ago there was a temple erected by King Solomon, then destroyed by the Babylonians but restored by Jews after the return from the captivity. At the time of the coming to this earth of Christ the Savior, during the rule of Herod, this Temple was remodeled and got the name of The Second Temple.

This place is considered to be sacred not only to the Jews, but also to Christians and Muslims. For Christians this place is sacred because the Savior visited it, and Muslims believe that Mahomet, supposedly escorted by the Archangel Gabriel, was lifted from it to the throne of Allah. However, on the place of the destroyed last temple there are now two mosques – one of them The Dome of the Rock according to tradition stands upon the place of ancient "holy of holies" of the Jewish temple.

At present, this place is controlled by Arabs. Previously, the visit to the Temple Mount was unrestricted to all, however, in 2000 the entrance was closed, because the Arabs were attacking Jewish pilgrims.

In 2003 the possibility to visit the Temple Mount was restored to non-Muslims, but under the strictest control of the Arab organization Waqf and only from Sunday through Thursday from 7.30 AM to 10.00 AM, and also one hour (12.30 to 1.30 PM).

The visit is permitted only by permit issued by Waqf issued to the tourist agencies, but even thus there are many restrictions.

A guide from a tourist agency Nachman Kupietsky said that it is categorically forbidden to bring to the Temple Mount books and newspapers printed in Hebrew: they are immediately confiscated by the Arab guards. People who in the opinion of Arabs pray there, are immediately removed. Among the tourists of Kupietsky's group was a woman, who got tired, took a seat on the bench and lowered her head. The Arabs decided that she was praying and with a lot of yelling she was arrested, incarcerated for 6 hours and released after she signed a document that she will never again attempt to come the Temple Mount! Jews are forbidden even to wear their yarmulkes there. When Kupietsky even took out a book with pictures of the interior of Muslim mosques to show it to the Christian group -- it was taken away from him.

Tourists were also brought to "Solomon's stables". The Arabs have recently made in them some excavation and built another large mosque. At this, the barbarians have taken away by trucks the soil and disrupted the work of Jewish and Christian archeologists, and thus badly damaged the remnants of the "Western Wall" or the "Wailing Wall", where prayer is still permitted. Only international scandal, when this barbarism was reported, has stopped the Arabs.

The newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of March 4th devoted 4 full pages to the terrible situation of Christians in the Middle East, who are forced out by Israelis as well as Muslim Egyptians. This is especially noticeable in Jerusalem. In 1948 there were 30 thousand Christians, there now remain some 12 thousand. This according to a report of the newspaper "Proche-Orient Chretien" made by the Catholic priest Franz Bouwen. But it is now considered that the Christians population in Jerusalem is 6 thousand, and more probably 4,500!

The matter of the number of Christians in the Holy Land greatly worries the representatives of all the Christian denominations in this region.

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS (apparently to Bishop John (Legky) of August 2/15 1994

Dear Right Reverend Vladyko!

For quite some time I have no news from you. Fr. Vladimir has returned from [summer] camp. Several times at my request and on his own, he tried to call you, but heard that you are visiting parishes. Meanwhile, my situation in particular is worse and worse.

It seems that my reports were not read there [at Synod], and Bishop Hilarion got the order to not provide me with minutes of the Council's meetings, so that for some time that I have no news from any side.

Besides, I was feeling very badly, partly because the unusual heat this summer. Alas, my first request to you is to inform me about your health and activities.

From another events which have reached me – in the Synod a Bishop Yevtikhy was consecrated for the Far East, who was made Archbishop at the same time (at least that is what I have heard from some). I was not informed of it and was not present at this consecration. Only a year ago I was present at the meetings of the Council and sometimes the Synod. Now the matter is otherwise: if one has expressed disagreement in some case with the Metropolitan, he loses all his rights.

Barnabas was secretly consecrated. The late Archbishop Anthony of Geneva has permitted this because of a consecration in Russia (Lazarus Zhurbenko, "Ch. N."). It was presumed that this secret would be never revealed until his death. However, the Metropolitan on his own has decided to openly announce Barnabas as a bishop, contrary to the wishes of Archbishop Anthony (his first Deputy) who quite justly considered him unfit for this. Archbishop Anthony was his

diocesan bishop and knew his defects well. The Metropolitan has not taken this into consideration and has revealed his incognito without the knowledge of anyone. Despite the obvious patronage of the Metropolitan for Barnabas, I have presented several reports about the necessity to have him properly tried and defrocked for numerous violations of the canons. I do not know if there was any decision made about my reports to the Synod. At one time there was a rumor that they were agreeing about a trial, but for some reason because of all his crimes (including the appeal on Synod letterhead acknowledging Ukrainian autocephality) Barnabas was "punished" by a trip to Jerusalem under suspension for three months duration. Such punishment is not provided for by the canons. According to the rules he should be defrocked.

There are a whole series of acts of which it is possible to make accusations, punishable by defrocking also of the Metropolitan himself, but this would not be beneficial for our Church in front of Moscow. It would be better to act in some other way. But how? Right now I see no answer.

Recently I studied the question of the Patriarchal Ukase of December 7/20th 1920 (Correctly: November. "Ch. N.").

Besides me, Fr. Michael Polsky, Regelson, and Rusak wrote on this subject. All agree that this is the very last ukase of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration. I have reported on this to the Synod, but the Metropolitan does not enter into the essence of this matter. He does not go into this matter beyond its understanding of his authority and his independence abroad. But it is also possible that here there is something else too. Our hierarchs in recent times have gotten out of habit of true conciliarity (sobornost) and have let him get used to the idea that there is only the personal power of the First Hierarch. An example of this is the case of the Palestine Society, which on the advice of the good for nothing Synod female lawyer, tried to grab the property of the free and independent Palestine Society in the Holy Land, having created in America a dummy, with members and the President appointed by the Metropolitan. This has ended in a scandal, because the government has understood what is the matter and the property was returned to the Jerusalem Section, while the Synod's Society was forbidden to enter the Raskopki (the headquarters -- The Excavations, "Ch. N"). Yet the Council, ignoring this has decided to establish at the Raskopki a brotherhood and put the administrative center of the Mission in a strange building. During my rule, there were litigations on part of dioceses, and the Synod was in the role of an expert, and even this happened only in the few cases, when there was a total assurance of success.

Fr. Anthony, while Chief of the Mission won from the [Israeli] government \$7.5 million and now, in addition to the monetary loss there is added the scandal of Synod's pretense to property which never belonged to it.

I have heard that following the Synod, you are getting to be involved in Greek matters. I am pretty well acquainted with this public. Everyone of them is connected with something uncanonical; with some of them it is possible to be friendly, but not to get involved with them canonically.

I ask for your holy prayers and send you heartfelt brotherly greetings. Waiting for news.

With love in Christ + Bishop Gregory

From the editors: Metropolitan Vitaly announced the secret consecration of Bishop Lazarus during the parish feast in Nyack. Bishop Lazarus, after coming to America for the first time, said to Bishop Gregory that if Metropolitan Vitaly had revealed this secret some 3 weeks earlier, he would have been arrested!

Archbishop Anthony was so upset about this act of the Metropolitan, that he has boycotted two Synod's meetings in protest.

Letter of Bishop Gregory to the Abbess Magdalene (nee Countess Grabbe) of May 11/24th 1986

Dear Mother Magdalene,

In order that you be informed about what is going on, I am sending you a copy of the response of Fr. Anthony (Grabbe, "Ch. N.") to the ukase of the Synod prior to the forthcoming meeting next week. I have helped him with the argumentation, since he, after all, still is not sufficiently acquainted with the canons. Undoubtedly the advance decision of the investigating committee regarding his case sounds like one the resolutions from the period of the [Russian] Civil War: let judge and hang. Not the slightest hint is noticeable, for the sake of external decency, to take into consideration any matter for the benefit of the accused.

The prejudice is so strong that I have very little hope any show of impartiality; except that the more independent thinking Bishop Anthony of Geneva will show it. The expressions of sympathy by Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco in writing and telephone sound this way: I love you, sympathize with you, but you should not be in the administration, and your son must be eliminated together with whatever useful what he did in the Holy Land. They do not understand here and do not want to know what a tremendous work Fr. Anthony accomplished, with the [Jerusalem] Patriarchate alone. After all, when I went to the Holy Land for the first time during the tenure of Fr. Dimitry (Biakai, "Ch. N.") at that time there came a demand of the Patriarchate to stop the commemoration of our Metropolitan (Anastassy, "Ch. N."). We beat off the attack, but while Fr. Anthony was there the relations with the Patriarchate became much better than during his predecessors and, it seems that Archimandrite Anthony (later of Los Angeles) who left the Mission without any defense -- will not forgive him for that.

I am worried about the activity of our First Hierarch. He is attached to Montréal and is destroying New York. What the cultured and attentive parishioners are saying is troublesome: Vladyka does not want a center in New York. Therefore he is doing everything in order to destroy it, so that it would not be able to function financially and he would have a reason to sell the Synod building, and exchange for this money a smaller church in the suburbs and the millions transferred to

purchasing a modest house, having solid capital. By the way, this was proposed at one time to the late Metropolitan by Nikita [Chakirov]. The very same people believe that now I am the obstacle and they explain my firing by this and wish that I go as soon as possible to France. Such concerns, especially of our American parishioners, Nastia has very sensibly laid out in her letter to Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco, but how can he help in someone else's diocese?

To destroy the center, of course, is not difficult, but to sell it (a national architectural monument) is not that easy, while morally it would be a big blow, since it is the memorial of two Metropolitans, especially of Anastassy, and the place of a number of glorifications.

My time and term continue to be sort of unclear. Since the Metropolitan is tired of my presence here and I myself feel rather uncomfortable with his obvious lack of love – I feel the urge to leave sooner. On the other hand, I have to wait for a visa and an operation, and after that my friends want to give me a send-off party and this is doubtful before August. If the situation in the Synod building becomes very hard – for the time being I will move in with Masha or Mitya [his daughter and son]. The Pennsylvanians, who have become very attached to me, also want to give a send-off party for me. Therefore, I cannot provide an exact schedule.

May the Lord's blessing be with you. Loving you + Bishop Gregory

Note from the editors: While Chief of the Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, Archimandrite Anthony (Sinkevich, later Archbishop of Los Angeles) not only left the Mission "without a defense", but also took with him all the Mission's money.

Archimandrite Anthony (Grabbe) over 17 years sued the Israeli government and in the end this litigation won \$7.5 million out of which more than 2 million was taken out for the litigation costs, because the lawyers were working under the agreement, that they would be paid when the case was won. The main records of Chief of the Mission were left in Jerusalem, but the "investigative committee" headed by Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles didn't permit him to go to the Holy Land to get them. The committee also never mentioned in its report that in New York it received nearly a hundred files with financial records!

The main document which helped to win this case against the Israeli government was a note made by an Israeli soldier, who has demanded from Fr. Methodius (a deputy of the Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Anthony Sinkevich) the keys from the Mission's buildings. He refused, but handed over the keys after he got the note which stated that the keys were to be given over under threat of force.

Letter by Bishop Gregory to V. I. Alexeyev of March 21/April 3rd 1990

Dear Vassily Ivanovich;

Thank you for your letter of March 30th. I will answer it more or less point by point.

1. Our idea is to help the rise of the free part of the Church in Russia by giving her a hierarchy independent of the atheists. But this is a difficult task. One would wish that the hierarchy arising there would continue to freely develop and, in the best case, would take over control. Actually, especially in the beginning it can just survive, if it is not immediately closed. I must tell you that I am personally afraid that this operation is undertaken a bit too early, and that I have had nothing to do with it since the Metropolitan without consulting me has sent a visa to Bishop Lazarus and to my absent friend (S. Krasovitzky, "Ch. N."). Since Lazarus was going, I have not stopped the going of my friend. Bishop Lazarus is a charming person, a convinced one and self-sacrificing. However, he is not of a man of large scale and already is suffering from walking the catacomb path. Practically speaking, he is not able to work in the open. With him a good young priest came, who in the end could replace him, but he is not capable of becoming a leader for all of Russia. At the present moment I am willing to support even this, but on the condition that a person be found with broader qualities. Then the Church in Russia should develop independently.
2. According to my idea about having a authoritative enough leader, probably already a metropolitan, he should claim to have the title of one who acts as deputy of the Patriarchal throne, instead of one who has betrayed the principles of Patriarch Tikhon and Metropolitans Peter and Cyril. The role of the Church Abroad after the consecration of the first hierarchs should cease, while caring for things only abroad.
3. The denial of the declaration of 1927 is not enough for the true Church: there should be also the denial of Ecumenism, which is the first step into the kingdom of Antichrist, which it seems is not far away.
4. The Uniate matter is quite separate. I believe that in Galicia and other western dioceses should happen a sort of re-shuffling. Koenigsberg was never in the Uniate's zone and it is therefore not significant.
5. The most difficult task is the passage of our catacomb believers into a public situation. They are not inclined to come out and do missionary work of a wider scale and they might give a very hostile reception to the new clergymen who already have declared their willingness to follow us.

These matters will be faced now by the Bishops' Council in May. I have already almost decided not to go to the Council, which is to happen in Canada, because heart disorders are making themselves known, but some bishops believe that my participation is important and I am inclined to take the risk.

The time of Pascha is approaching and my letter might come during Holy Week. Therefore, now I conclude it with the premature greeting: Christ is Risen! May the Lord grant to you to meet and spend joyfully the forthcoming Paschal days. My greetings to Ludmila Vassilievna. May the Lord's blessing be with you.

