

Epistle of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church

Dearly beloved in the Lord, Fathers, Brothers, and Sisters,
Christ is in our midst!

The Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, continues to confess, as it ever has, our unwavering faith in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church, founded by the Son of God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the pillar and foundation of the truth (1Tim. 3:15), and against which even the gates of hell cannot prevail (Matt. 16:18).

We bear witness that it is not possible for the Church of God to be annihilated, destroyed, or divided, for She is a concurrently a divine and human organism, the Body of Christ, wherein all of us who are believers make up His Body, and the Head of this Church Body is Christ (Col. 1:18). Just as Christ cannot be divided, so also is it impossible for the Church of Christ to be divided. The only thing that is possible is that those who do not recognize Her teachings and precepts fall away from the unified Body of the Church.

In our age of universal apostasy, a most sorrowful time in human history, full of scandals and temptations, the enemy of the human race, in his never-ending battle against the Church, has raised up an enormous number of false teachings, in order to tear away entire nations from the Body of the Church of Christ.

We confess our adherence to the teaching of the Holy Church, and reject all of the various false teachings distorting Her catechism.

By the authority of the Holy Spirit of God, and in concordance with the Church's holy tradition, we condemn Sergianism, i.e. the voluntary and self-serving subjection of the Church to the service of the atheistic powers of this world, as a blasphemous heresy.

We also condemn the introduction of the new calendar into the life of the Orthodox Church, as something that leads to schism and paves the way for the acceptance of the modern innovation of the heresy of ecumenism.

Again and again, we confirm and uphold the anathema pronounced by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia against the heresy of ecumenism, and we want to make it perfectly clear that we can have no communion of any kind with those who accept this heresy:

To those who attack the Church of Christ by teaching that Christ's Church is divided into so-called "branches" which differ in doctrine and way of life,

or that the Church does not exist visibly, but will be formed in the future when all "branches" or sects or denominations, and even religions will be united into one body; and who do not distinguish the Priesthood and Mysteries of the Church from those of the heretics, but say that the baptism and Eucharist of heretics is effectual for salvation; therefore, to those who knowingly have communion with these aforementioned heretics or who advocate, disseminate, or defend their heresy of ecumenism under the pretext of brotherly love or the supposed unification of separated Christians, Anathema!

With sorrow, we must point out, that at the present time, all of the historical local Orthodox Churches, as they are called, have been infected with the heresy of ecumenism, and have fallen away from the Church of Christ. As a graphic example of this statement, we need only recall the joint prayers in Assisi on January 24th, 2002, at which Roman Catholics, all kinds of Protestants, Moslems, and the representatives of every imaginable religion were joined by the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, as well as bishops and representatives of all of the other "Orthodox" churches.

Neither can we have any kind of communion with those of the so-called True Orthodox Christians who confess the impious teaching of the Greek Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, i. e. crypto-ecumenism, and have communion with his "Synod in Resistance."

Nor can we recognize the Moscow Patriarchate, which was created by the atheistic authorities of the Soviet Union from a small group of bishops with Met. Sergius (Stragorodsky) as their leader, and infected with the heresy of ecumenism, as an Orthodox Church, and we bear witness that the Moscow Patriarchate broke off from the martyric Catacomb Church of Russia, and from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, cooperated with the godless authorities, and took an active part in the persecution of True Orthodox Christians.

The Most Blessed Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), in a letter to Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) in 1935 wrote:

"As far as you are concerned, that which separates you from us is that, in your desire to provide a secure existence for yourself, you have attempted to unite light with darkness. You have fallen into a temptation, the essence of which is spoken of in the holy Gospel. Once, the Spirit of Evil tried to tempt the Son of God Himself by enticing him with an image of easy material success, with the condition that He would adore him, the Son of Perdition. You have not followed the example of Christ, the holy martyrs and confessors, who rejected such a compromise, but have bowed down to the ancient enemy of our salvation when, for the sake of an illusory benefit, for the sake of maintaining an outward organization, you announced that the joys of the godless authorities were your joys,

and that their enemies were your enemies. You have even tried to uncrown the martyrs and confessors of the past few years (yourself included, for I happen to know that at one time you also demonstrated resoluteness and landed in jail for it), stating that they endured imprisonment, exile and torture, not for the sake of Christ, but because they were counter-revolutionaries. In so doing, you have blasphemed their memory. You have trivialized their exploits, and thrown cold water upon those who, perhaps, might have themselves joined the ranks of martyrs for the Faith. You have cut yourself off from the flower and the adornment of the Russian Church. In this neither I, nor my colleagues abroad, will ever follow your lead.”

The followers of Metropolitan Sergius, in the person of the present members of the Moscow Patriarchate, not only have refused to renounce the compromises of their precursor, but rather have become entrenched in them, and continue to serve the powers that be. Neither have they renounced the traitorous declaration of Metropolitan Sergius, nor their apostate activities of the past few decades. To the contrary, they justify the adulterous union of their church with the atheists, even trying to use Church tradition to do so.

The bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate, in their attempt to represent themselves as the inheritors and rightful heirs of the martyric Russian Orthodox Church, have announced the canonization of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia. This counterfeit canonization exhibits the extreme level of the craftiness and unprincipled state of the present day hierarchs of the MP, for they betray themselves when they state that they recognize those same New Martyrs and Confessors, which Metropolitan Sergius considered to be heretics and enemies of the Church, and outright apostates from the God the Truth. The contemporary defenders and perpetuators of the deeds of Metropolitan Sergius serve moliebens before the holy relics of the same confessors, whom Metropolitan Sergius declared to be graceless schismatics and political criminals, and whom he handed over for punishment, intensifying the persecution that they endured from the atheistic authorities. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers (Matt. 23:29-33).

Governed by the good of the Church of God, we collectively endorse the standard ecclesiastical rite for receiving those who desire to unite themselves to the Orthodox Church from among the clergy and faithful of the communities of “world Orthodoxy,” first and foremost, from the Moscow Patriarchate.

We call upon you, beloved children of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, to remain loyal to the teaching of the holy Orthodox Church, and have nothing to do with the apostate churches of “world” Orthodoxy. “See then that ye walk circumspectly” (Eph. 5:15), children of the Church of God, so that ye neither are fooled nor fall away from the true path, in this evil time. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:20), as our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said to His true disciples.

The Lord God has forbidden us from falling into despair, and has called us to everywhere, and at all times, work out our own salvation, so that the evil enemy will not be able to steal away our treasure and keep us from reaching our heavenly homeland. Despite the fact that “a righteous man there is no more” (Ps. 11:1), and that the number of believers today that wish to stand firmly for the truth is small, let us nevertheless rejoice that we are unswervingly on the path of confessing true Orthodoxy – the salvific teaching of the holy Fathers and of the holy councils. All we need to do is “endure to the end” (Matt. 24: 13). For, in the words of St. Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople, “Even if only a small number of people shall remain true to Orthodoxy and righteousness, then even they shall be *the Church*, and the power and authority of the decrees of the Church shall live on in them, even if they shall have to endure persecution for the Faith, which will only serve for their eternal glory and the salvation of their souls. (1 Apology in defense of the holy icons, 6).

Our position, as far as the apostasy of our days is concerned, is irreconcilable. There are also various other jurisdictions of the True Orthodox Church, who are trying to preserve their own Orthodox confession unassailable. There are also others outside of the Orthodox Church, who have yet to open their hearts to His call, which He makes through His mercy, and in time, join themselves to true holy Orthodoxy. These “seven thousand” shall be His portion in the coming end times.

The false Orthodox churches, extending their hands to the powers of darkness, are fearlessly progressing along the path of self-destruction and self-extinction, blindly believing that the “name of Jesus” will save them even in their apostasy and blasphemy, and neglecting the fearsome words of our Lord (Matt. 7: 22-23). Christians who have lost the salt of Christianity, and Orthodox who know nothing of what it really means to be Orthodox, guided by deceptive feelings into the abyss of false spirituality, will never be able to distinguish the true Faith from a counterfeit one, or Christ from the anti-Christ.

Our task must continue to be the preaching of the truth. Let us remember that the part of the “fearful and unbelieving” is fiery Gehenna (Rev. 21:8). The Lord shall deprive them, as lukewarm, of His radiant company.

Let each one of us think of himself as a warrior of Christ. Let each one of us help the next one – strengthening resolve, uplifting through hope; and let us pray for each other.

Let the Fathers of the Church be our leaders and lighthouses on this course, as well as the army of new martyrs of the Russian Church, and the zealous defenders of True Orthodoxy, St. John of San Francisco and St. Philaret of New York.

May our Lord and God Jesus Christ help all of us to acquire the spirit of truth, and preserve us from the path that leads to perdition. Amen.

January 28/February 10, 2008
The Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia
Suzdal, Russia

✠Metropolitan Valentine

✠Archbishop Theodore

✠Archbishop Seraphim

✠Archbishop Ilarion

✠Bishop Timothy

✠Bishop Irinarkh

✠Bishop Andrew

✠Bishop James

✠Bishop Ambrose