

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AND FOREIGN RELATIONS

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

NEWSLETTER #19

November, 1978

THE GLORIFICATION OF ST. XENIA THE BLESSED IN NEW YORK CITY

In fulfilment of the decision of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad dated 11/24 September, 1978, the solemn glorification of St. Xenia the Blessed of Petersburg was held. The magnificent divine services, presided over by His Eminence the Metropolitan, were conducted with great spiritual fervor in the extensive synodal cathedral, and even in the courtyard and part of the street, where the entire service was broadcast over a loudspeaker system. Simultaneously, Radio Liberty recorded it on tape for transmission into the Soviet Union. At the telephoned request of the director of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), tape recordings of the services made by private individuals were sent abroad for transmission into the Soviet Union from England.

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN DIOCESE

The Vestnik (Herald) (no.12: Oct., 1978), the official publication of our Western European diocese, reports on the twelfth diocesan assembly of that diocese.

The assembly convened in Lyons in March of this year, presided over by Archbishop Antony of Geneva and Western Europe. Such assemblies take place every three years in various centers throughout the diocese. Fourteen clergymen and sixteen laymen took part in the conference as delegates. The sessions were conducted alternately in Russian and French. For those who could not understand, a translation was made with the aid of individual earphones.

Parishioners of the local Lyons parish, newspaper reporters and various representatives of heterodox circles attended the assembly as observers.

In his address outlining the position of the Orthodox Church, and the Russian Church in particular, Archbishop Antony most decisively protested the possible convoking of a "Great Pan-Orthodox Council" in the near future. He emphasized that, even should such a "Council" take place, bishops who are not free and who are sent to it by their governments would not be able to speak on behalf of the faithful who are constrained to silence by means of the most cruel persecutions. He expressed doubt that these bishop-delegates would be able to decide to support the censuring of the atheism forcibly thrust upon the inhabitants of atheistic lands. The journal further reports that the address of His Grace Archbishop Antony will be published in the form of a separate pamphlet, and therefore only brief excerpts thereof were cited.

The assembly turned to the faithful with an epistle signed by its spiritual leader, which was published in two editions—Russian and French (N.B.—an English translation appears in Orthodox Life, 1978, #5). "The question of modernization of Church life, so often advanced at this time, does not concern us," the epistle says. "It is alien to us who maintain Orthodoxy on the pious past of Europe. And besides this, after ten long centuries of the "Roman Catholic" heresy, are we not eyewitnesses to how the church of Rome now bears the brunt of the result of the militant modernism permitted by the Second

Vatican Council? This lamentable example should serve as a restraining factor for those who are now tempted by "experiences" of both ecumenism and modernism. And this is all the more true since the saintly hierarch Theophan the Recluse of Vyshensk so rightly taught that Orthodoxy is essentially a struggle (podvig). Therefore, no matter how the presently permitted relaxations are expressed, no matter what simplifications might be given (in Church and the spiritual life), one should understand that the Kingdom of Heaven 'is taken by force'—through prayer and spiritual struggle. And no kind of 'aggiornamento' can dispense with this or replace it with anything else! We wish to remain loyal to the faith of our holy fathers, to faith in the one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church!"

AFTER THE DEATH OF METROPOLITAN NIKODIM

The sudden death of Metropolitan Nikodim of Leningrad, who died of a heart attack in the personal reception room of the newly-elected Pope John Paul I while congratulating him, has left a strong impression. Despite the fact that there is a Greek Orthodox Church in Rome, the body of the dead metropolitan was placed in the Vatican church of St. Anne until transferred to the Soviet Union for burial. The Vatican was especially grieved by his death. The director of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity announced that the late churchman was "open to any deepening of Christian revelation which could contribute to full unity of the churches."

The new pope of Rome, who died suddenly himself in a matter of days, related to those around him with great grief that "Two days ago the Metropolitan of Leningrad died in my arms...I was in the process of responding to his address, and let me assure you that never in my life have I heard more beautiful words about the (Roman Catholic) church than those which he uttered. I cannot repeat them. They remain a secret. But they truly struck me..." Both of the men who took part in that discussion have by now stood before the Dread Judgment Seat; their sentences remain hidden, but Orthodox thought involuntarily asks why the pope found it necessary to conceal the "Orthodox" metropolitan's words.

The ecumenical labors of the metropolitan gained recognition in diverse quarters—especially, of course, among the Catholics, with whom he was so close. Cardinal Willebrands attended the funeral services in Leningrad as the Vatican's representative. Rabbi Arthur Scheier arrived for the funeral from America, as did two Jesuit priests: John Long and Donald Campion. The latter, ironically, represented an organization specializing in the defense of human rights and religious freedom.

The funeral was served by Patriarch Pimen who, in his eulogy, emphasized the "tremendous service" rendered by Metropolitan Nikodim to the Church and the entire Russian nation.

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE SERVES PANIKHIDAS FOR THE POPES

Archbishop George, head of the Russian portion of the Western European Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, as reported in the Russian-language newspaper Russian Thought (Oct. 5), served, in the company of his clergy, a solemn panikhida in St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral in Paris. The panikhida was for Pope Paul VI and the newly-departed John Paul I.

THE RECOMMENDATION OF A BLASPHEMOUS BOOK

The Orthodox Observer, official mouthpiece of the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America, in its book review section, devoted considerable space to a book by a German orthodox Jew, Rolf Gompertz, entitled My Jewish Brother Jesus, "a different Biblical novel." It was pointed out in the notice that among the testimonials given is one by Bishop Meletius, who heads the Fourth District of the Greek Archdiocese. The Department of Public and Foreign Affairs was interested in what an Orthodox bishop could say favorably about a book written about Christ by an orthodox Jew, insofar as no one would in any way expect that the author could acknowledge the divinity of our Savior. And that only at best.

Unfortunately, the book revealed all its blasphemous contents as soon as it was obtained. (The Savior is presented as not believing in Himself, slothful, and a political conspirator of scant ability; Mary Magdalene is, of course, presented as a woman of base conduct who bestowed her love on Judas; and Judas himself is exalted as a friend of the Savior he betrayed!) Yet Bishop Meletius found it possible to react to this book with the following review: "(This) is a book worth publishing, and I would like to congratulate you for this interesting and enlightening manuscript. I noted that it is your aim to help and create mutual understanding and respect, so that we may live side by side in dignity and peace. If I may add with the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ the Savior of the world."

METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS IN MOSCOW

In an article located on the front page of the October 17 issue of the newspaper New Russian Word, signed with the initials T.S., it is reported that "The head of the Russian (sic) Orthodox Church in America, Metropolitan Theodosius, visited the Soviet Union." Here one must suppose either that the correspondent was insufficiently informed, or that a misprint took place during publication, for the former Russian Metropolia eliminated the word "Russian" from its title when it received its "autocephaly" from Moscow, and now calls itself the "Orthodox Church in America."

Metropolitan Theodosius' stay in Moscow, which took place at the invitation of the Soviet Patriarchate, prevented him from attending the funeral of Pope John Paul I of Rome. The Patriarch of Moscow directed to his guest the maximum amount of attention. Accompanied by several bishops, he personally met him at the Sheremetev Airport and later escorted him when he departed.

In Russia, Metropolitan Theodosius served frequently in various churches, in Odessa, Tbilisi and Leningrad. He also visited the Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, where he concelebrated with Patriarch Pimen. On October 10, a reception was held for Metropolitan Theodosius at the American embassy. He also took full advantage of his stay in the Soviet Union to invite Fr. Dimitri Dudko to visit him at his hotel.

The metropolitan of the "O.C.A." returned to the United States on October 11.

A SENSELESS DISTURBANCE

The October 5 issue of Hellenic Chronicle reports that the Greek Orthodox Church has initiated a campaign in Athens to pressure the Roman Catholics into revoking the act whereby they degraded a number

of saints, removing them from their calendar completely due to insufficient historical grounds for their existence, or because they have concluded that such saints have ceased to have universal significance.

The Greek Church is fighting especially for the upgrading to their former position of such great saints of the East as St. Nicholas, who has been degraded to a lower position, and the Greatmartyrs Catherine and Barbara, who have been declared mythical persons.

It is difficult for the Orthodox mind to comprehend this act of the Church of Greece, for, having separated itself from the Church in 1054, Roman Catholicism has long had nothing in common with Her, and by its innumerable innovations has not ceased to magnify the rift between it and us. The Catholics' veneration of this or that saint is their own personal affair and concerns the Orthodox not in the least.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE VESTIGES OF A CRIME

The newspaper Russian Thought has reprinted an article from the Chronicle Press (#49), which reports that in October of 1977, in Ekaterinburg (renamed by the Soviets Sverdlovsk), the Hypatiev House, in which the entire imperial family and their faithful servants were slain, was leveled to the ground. It is supposed that the destruction of the house was carried out in connection with the fact that in the course of the past few years pilgrimages began to trickle there. Six years ago, a plaque declaring that the imperial family had been "executed" in the house was removed. At that time a school was still located in the house. Two weeks before the demolition of the Hypatiev House, the school was moved to another location.

Both the murder of the imperial family and the demolition of the house in which they perished were carried out under cover of darkness. Much machinery, bulldozers and cranes were brought to the house and, as on that night of evil memory, the house itself was surrounded by soldiers and militia. Despite this, a crowd of people gathered at the site. As reported in the Chronicle Press, no less than three hundred people were present at the demolition of the last vestiges of the old crime. Some good man sent the Chronicle a photograph of the demolished house in which one can discern only a little heap of rubble.

The fact that a crowd of three hundred people assembled at the dread Hypatiev basement, not fearing the presence of the police and military, sixty years after the murder and despite the late hour, bears witness that the memory of the Tsar-Martyr and his family has not been thoroughly expunged from the memory of the people.

"IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE MOTHER CHURCH"

In connection with the death of Pope Paul VI of Rome, Archbishop Iakovos received an invitation from President Carter to be a member of the American delegation to the pope's funeral. Intrigued by the honor shown him, the archbishop, exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate for America, nonetheless decided to request permission to accept the invitation to go with the delegation to Rome. In a telegram forwarded to the patriarch, Archbishop Iakovos reported that a special government plane was departing on August 11 and requested a blessing to depart on that flight. The next day the patriarch's reply arrived, informing "His Beloved Eminence" that "given the present circumstances,

it is in the best interest of the Mother Church not to accept your request to go to Rome." It was suggested to him to politely decline.

A similar circumstance had already occurred when it was suggested that Archbishop Iakovos head the American delegation to the funeral of Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus. He was refused permission at that time on the grounds that such a trip would not have been in the interests of the Mother Church.

Twice offended by Constantinople's refusal to approve his acting as representative abroad, Archbishop Iakovos sent the patriarch a second telegram, in which he stated that, in view of the fact that his ministry in America was accorded no significance, he, "in the best interests of the Mother Church," asked permission to submit his resignation.

The patriarch's telegram in reply to Archbishop Iakovos stated that his telegram requesting permission to retire, from the canonical point of view "only expresses an intention to resign from his duties as Archbishop of the Archdiocese of the Americas" and "does not constitute a proper resignation," which the patriarch declines to accept "in the best interests of the Church."

It is difficult to say with certainty what exactly compelled Patriarch Demetrius to protest against the honor shown a representative of his Church. Of course, one cannot here suspect Constantinople of being unsympathetic towards one more ecumenical appearance. It is entirely possible, however, that Constantinople is seriously disturbed by the increasing independence of its American eparchy which, to a significant degree, supports the Mother Church materially.

ON THE DEATH OF POPE JOHN PAUL I

The sudden death of Pope John Paul I provoked a series of rumors and suspicions regarding the possibility of it having been violently perpetrated. As reported by Le Tribune de Geneve (Oct. 1), Le Monde (Oct. 4), and a number of other European newspapers, a series of doctors immediately began to express doubt as to the veracity of the official report on the cause of the pope's death. Prof. Luigi Prati, senior physician of the cardiological ward of Rome's San Camilla Hospital, immediately spoke out against the official diagnosis. His opinion, as well as that of the noted neurologist Prof. Giovanni Arlema, was reported in the newspaper Ici Paris (Oct. 5), which devoted an entire page to this question. After this, there followed a number of other statements by other specialists, who spoke out in favor of an autopsy to determine whether or not the pope died of natural causes. The opinion was advanced that the death of the pope was evocative of the fatal symptoms of such a poison as curare or something that produces effects similar to it.

Demands for an autopsy, regardless from what quarter they originated, however, were fruitless, for in 1975 Pope Paul VI issued a decretal forbidding autopsies on the bodies of any pope. It is, however, of interest that in Catholic circles conversation on the probability of poisoning have come from conservative circles and, moreover, from those under the influence of Archbishop Lefebvre.

The October 25th issue of the newspaper Spotlight, summing up these rumors, tried to discover the reason why someone would wish the death of John Paul I. According to its report the reports from several other newspapers, it seems that the pope, not very widely known as a cardinal, betrayed the aspirations of several factions. It was expected that he would be acceptable to all as a "yes man," but

would not meddle with the "progressive" Curia. Furthermore, it seemed that he began to show initiative as a defender of tradition and, most important, as a convinced anticommunist. If this is true, it confirms the suspicion that his death was contrived.

THE ELECTION OF THE NEW POPE

The unexpected death of Pope John Paul I again presented the cardinals with the problem of electing a pope. If they elected the late pope very quickly (apparently reaching an agreement with comparative ease; perhaps even before the conclave), the rift between conservatives and reformers was all the more apparent during the new election. Theoretically, what takes place during a conclave should not be revealed to anyone outside; but in actuality, one of the cardinals talked, and some of the secrets were revealed.

Cardinal Siri of Genoa was the conservative candidate, and Cardinal Benelli was the reform candidate. Before the election, Cardinal Siri gave an interview to a correspondent of a Turin newspaper. He then attacked the recently deceased pope. The reporter agreed not to print the interview until the conclave sessions had begun. Cardinal Siri did not know, however, that that reporter was a partisan of Cardinal Benelli, whom he informed of the contents of the interview. Much to Siri's dismay, on the morning of the opening of the conclave, a newspaper containing the interview was printed and distributed to all who were to take part in the conclave. This did no particular damage to Benelli, but rendered Siri's candidature untenable. At the beginning, both received 25 to 30 votes. Benelli at one point received as many as 75, and his supporters were confident of victory. But the conservatives decided to block him no matter what. The question was resolved in the course of a day; the obvious rivalry of the two Italians so apparent, the cardinals began to consider electing a man of another nation. At first they put forward two other candidates, and later voices began to be heard in favor of Cardinal Wojtyla of Cracow, who prior to this had received all of five votes. The well-known ecumenist Willebrands and the Polish Cardinal Wycinski supported him. Benelli and Siri did not hide their disappointment at Wojtyla's election.

What can we expect of the new pope? The support given him by the arch-ecumenist Willebrands speaks for itself. On the other hand, he is considered a conservative in many respects, which, however, does not especially coincide with several characteristics of his biography. During the war he participated actively in the underground movement and, in particular, in the organization of an underground theatre. He loves sports. When word came of his episcopal election, he was on a canoeing trip. He loves skiing. Once, while already a bishop, he serenaded a young lady skier on his guitar. One of his first orders in the Vatican after his election as pope was to set in order a long-abandoned tennis court. He is considered a traditional theologian; but once, however, he brought a large group of young people to see the play Jesus Christ, Superstar (which is difficult to consider anything but blasphemous), and applauded the actors. The new pope knows many languages, among which is Russian, which, however, he does not like to speak. They say that one of the reasons for his election was that he has experience in dealing with communists. In the Vatican, many await the spread of communism throughout the world and consider it important to have as pope a man with experience in dealing with them. They consider him less their deci-

sive opponent than his predecessor.

Of course, it is difficult to predict how he will govern his church. Too little time has passed, and the new pope is too individual to allow for ready assessment.

THE SYMBOL OF FAITH WILL NOT DO

The October 26th issue of the newspaper Catholic News reports that about five hundred liturgists from 116 Catholic dioceses gathered in Panama City, Florida, for a session of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. Bishop Rene Gracida announced to all the assembled delegates that the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States was set for November, and before it would be placed for a vote the questions concerning permission for Catholics to receive communion under "two species," not only on jubilee days (at one's marriage and at one's 25th and 50th wedding anniversaries) which was already decided after the Second Vatican Council, but on feasts days and Sundays throughout the year. It is also proposed to vote on permission for them to receive communion several times a day, and also to replace the Nicean-Constantinopolitan Creed with the so-called Apostles' Creed.

"There is nothing theologically wrong with the Nicean Creed," said Bishop Gracida, explaining the reason for this proposal. "It is just that it is difficult to understand and to memorise it. The Apostles' Creed is much simpler." Let us add that it is accepted by Protestants and it in several truths found in the Nicean Creed are not confessed.

If the recommendations of the Liturgical Commission are to be put into force, they must be accepted by two thirds of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops; only then can they be sent to the Vatican for final authorization.

YET ANOTHER BIBLE

In late October of the current year yet another Bible, entitled The New International Version of the Bible, was due to appear. As the October issue of Eternity magazine reports, of a circulation of 1,100,000 copies, advance sales have already accounted for 900,000. The new publication, the goal of which is to present to the reader a biblical text offering "accuracy, clarity and dignity," was apparently forced to alter its original intent somewhat. The translators who commenced work in the 1950's had hoped to create a text that "evangelicals could trust," and thus began to employ a particularly complex technique of translation, which in the end led them "to avoid not only denominational and ethnic bias, but bias toward an 'evangelical or fundamentalist Bible.'" What remains of the genuine text of the Bible under such conditions?

Each book of the Bible was checked separately by a subcommittee of four to five members, and later submitted for review to the General Editorial Committee, after which the text was approved by a permanent Committee on Bible Translation. Biblical experts strove for accuracy, while specialists in the English language, including Dr. Frank E. Gaebelein, sought to produce clarity of expression.

The magazine Eternity acknowledges that "the twin goals of accuracy and clarity often worked against each other," and the attempt to reconcile the Hebrew, Greek and English texts greatly hampered the work. Nonetheless, the publishers of the new Bible not only are not despondent, but even hope that the public will be so taken by it that

it can compete with previous editions which have already cornered the market.

Only one thing has not occurred to the poor "experts": one cannot translate the Word of God over a cup of coffee with a cigarette dangling between one's lips; all the more so if one's goal is clearly commercial. Relative "accuracy, clarity and dignity" of form are attained only by intense spiritual struggle together with sufficient empirical knowledge.

CATHOLIC NUN IS ADMINISTRATOR OF PARISH

According to a report printed in the October 22nd issue of National Catholic Register, the shortage of clergy in the Duluth, Minnesota, diocese has elicited a plan on the part of the diocesan government of joint administration of parishes by priests and nuns simultaneously. The idea was formed when Bishop Paul Anderson found it necessary to transfer the pastor of a church in Duluth to another parish. Attempting to solve the problem of the shortage of clergy, the diocesan authorities have appointed Sister Mary Paul Ludwig, a Benedictine nun, to fulfil all the functions of the pastor of the parish, with the exception of sacramental actions, the performance of which has been left once a week to Fr. Michael Lyons, who visits the parish as instructed by the diocese. "I won't be in charge of the parish in the traditional sense," he stated. "Sister Mary Paul is in charge as administrator. She is the essential image of Christ present to the people here. Because of that, I'll be free to deal with the essential parish services of Eucharist and the sacramental life of the community."

The appointment of a nun as actual pastress of a parish has provoked much turmoil among the faithful, so that the bishop is faced with the threat that if the parishioners do not adopt a new point of view on church service, he will have to close the parish. This is the first such appointment in the Catholic Church, and it is not surprising that the parishioners are seriously upset. So far as this action becomes diocese-wide, one may consider that women's pretenses to receiving priestly ordination within American Catholicism have gained an important precedent.

THE SHORTAGE OF CLERGY & THE ROLE OF WOMEN WITHIN CATHOLICISM

In its October 12th issue, the newspaper Catholic News reports, on the basis of information supplied by the Religious News Service, that for the last decade the number of clergy and monastics in Roman Catholicism has suffered a "dramatic decline." The number of nuns in the United States has dropped from 180,000 to 135,000; the number of monks from 12,000 to 8,000. The matter of seminarians is especially grim: instead of the 50,000 of past years, there are now less than 8,000!

As Bishop Francis Murphy of Baltimore of the National Conference of Diocesan Vocations Directors reports: the decline in vocations "has many reasons, and some, like celibacy, require us to rethink some fundamental issues about the nature of the priesthood." Bishop Murphy emphasized that it is essential for modern priests to be reconciled to a new understanding of the priesthood, in which they share with the laity functions which previously had been associated with the priesthood. The Catholic bishop encouraged further study and dialogue on the question of ordaining women to the priesthood, but noted that "not all ministry requires ordination, and not all women

who are interested in the ministry want to be priests. Nevertheless," he added, "a full examination of collaborations in ministry must include a serious look at the matter of ordination."

Urging "vocations directors" to give heed to the connection between celibates and church ministry, he also asked them "to explore the role of a woman in ministry as one aspect of the kind of ministry called for in today's world. In your own dioceses there are significant ministerial roles which could be held by women according to the present discipline of the Church. But to function effectively in such roles, women need access to training and formation programs for personal and spiritual development. As diocesan vocation directors, your attitudes towards the accessibility to women of training and placement opportunities is and will remain a crucial factor."

As we see, the question of women as Catholic priestesses is becoming more and more pointed and has as its partisans diocesan bishops in Minnesota and Maryland.

DONATIONS RECEIVED AND GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGED:

The Department of Public and Foreign Relations has thankfully received donations from: Archbishop Seraphim of Caracas and Venezuela, P. and N. Ilinsky, Igumen Innokenty, Rev. Anthony Gavalas, Archpriest V. Zheromsky, G. Petrovsky, I. Holowatch, G. Petrowsky, Archimandrite Panteleimon of Holy Transfiguration Greek Monastery, and the Gintse family of Australia.