

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC & FOREIGN RELATIONS
of the
SYNOD OF BISHOPS
OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA
NEWSLETTER #45-A

August, 1983

ON THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS WHICH CONVENED IN MANSONVILLE, QUEBEC

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russian opened on 21 July/3 August 1983, in the Skete of the Transfiguration in Mansonville, Quebec, on Canadian territory not far from the United States border.

The following hierarchs attended:

Metropolitan Philaret, President of the Council and the Synod of Bishops

Seraphim, Archbishop of Chicago, Detroit & the Midwest

Athanasius, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina & Paraguay

Vitaly, Archbishop of Montreal & Canada

Anthony, Archbishop of Los Angeles & Southern California

Anthony, Archbishop of Geneva & Western Europe

Anthony, Archbishop of Western America & San Francisco

Seraphim, Archbishop of Caracas & Venezuela

Paul, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia & New Zealand

Laurus, Archbishop of Syracuse & Holy Trinity

Constantine, Bishop of Richmond & Great Britain

Gregory, Bishop of Washington & Florida

Mark, Bishop of Berlin & Germany

Alypy, Bishop of Cleveland

Because of the state of his health, Archbishop Nathanael of Vienna & Austria did not attend; Bishop Nicander of Sao Paulo & Brazil was not in attendance for other reasons.

The Council opened with a solemn moleben before the miraculous Kursk-Root icon, after which its sessions began. At the beginning of the Council's deliberations, there arrived also the myrrh-streaming Iveron icon of the Mother of God, which immediately filled the whole spacious premises with sweet fragrance.

All of the bishops submitted reports on the state of their diocese, and thereafter followed reports on various subjects associated with the life of the Church.

Among the more significant resolutions of the Council were the following:

1.) For practical considerations "to entrust the administration of the Russian Orthodox parish of St. Nicholas in Rome to His Grace, Archbishop Anthony of Geneva & Western Europe."

2.) In connection with the petition of the Congress of Russian Americans "to approve the undertaking of collecting funds to construct a special bell tower in Holy Trinity Monastery and to hang a large bell therein on the occasion of the millennial anniversary of the Baptism of Rus'."

3.) ON CHURCH SCHOOLS

"(1.) Teaching children the Law of God is one of the chief pastoral tasks on all levels: diocesan, parish, and family.

"(2.) Rectors should instruct parents and encourage them, so that during pregnancy mothers should be particularly attentive in prayer and frequently resort to confession and Communion; and after the birth and baptism of their children, they bring them often to Communion. Parents should

see that their children's rooms have holy icons and are not decorated with foolish pictures, but rather with Orthodox religious images. As early as possible, parents should accustom their children to morning and evening prayers and to signing themselves with the cross. For pre-school children it is important that their parents take them to church, where they will be able to see their parents' own piety. It is useful to subscribe to a church-oriented magazine for children.

"(3.) Rectors are obliged to organize the Russian church instruction of the children and young people in their parishes. If the number of children in the parish is too small for the formation of a formal school, they should come to an agreement on the most convenient means of teaching the children the Russian language, prayers, and the Law of God. Small schools of from three to six students can nevertheless complete the full course of instruction in the Law of God, Russian Language, and history and geography, employing the existing programs and instructional materials even in the absence of trained teachers. In these cases, an association with the nearest well-established church school, and instruction and the administration of examinations in accordance with its program, is recommended. There are cases of isolated individuals who come to school twice a year to take examinations. Usually their results are higher than the average school level.

"(4.) As the examples of large parishes have shown, the construction of school buildings with halls enhances the entire life of the parish. The schools become centers of parish life and unite the young people and adults. Instruction in such schools must be as strict as possible, with precise adherence to the schedule. Then the young people have a more serious attitude toward their education.

"(5.) Apart from the School Administration at the Synod, it is desirable to form similar administrations in the dioceses. Through them the work of the schools can be facilitated and instructional materials can be found for them. Through them rectors can obtain sample programs, addresses from which textbooks may be ordered, and topics for competitive essays. Diocesan Administrations can assemble pedagogical conferences for representatives of the various schools. Such administrations have demonstrated their usefulness in the Eastern American Diocese.

"(6.) Among the responsibilities of the Synod's Inspector of Schools is the organization of further efforts to develop the best programs and textbooks, for which it is above all necessary to collect examples of all existing textbooks and establish a Commission to study them and select those which can be recommended for reprinting."

4.) With regard to the question of radio broadcasts in Russia in the name of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, the Council resolved "to thank Archbishop Anthony of Geneva for his initiative, and determines to provide him with worldwide support and assistance in this important task."

5.) Answering a question as to the permissibility of serving the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts in the evening, "their Graces, the members of the Council, do not object to this, providing that the celebrant and the communicants fast beginning with twelve o'clock the previous night."

6.) With regard to our attitude toward the Patriarchate of Moscow, the following resolution was adopted:

"The servile position taken by the Patriarchate of Moscow in relation to the atheistic, Communist regime has had an unavoidable effect upon all of church life in the U.S.S.R.

"A particularly blasphemous manifestation of this unnatural accommodation of the Church to the godless has been shown by the Patriarchate of Moscow in its order to serve pannikhidas [requiem services] for Brezhnev,

an avowed enemy of all faith, whose activity Patriarch Pimen has blasphemously referred to as 'God-pleasing.' Furthermore, it was ordered that he not be referred to as 'servant of God' at such requiem services, thus underscoring the fact that he was a stranger to God. However, no matter the manner in which he was referred, the requiem services included the prayer that this rejecter of faith and enemy of God be granted rest in the Kingdom of God, i.e. in the very serving of requiem services itself there lay an internal contradiction and falsehood. On the other hand, this act was also heretical, for it expressed the notion that a man may be accepted in the Kingdom of God who rejects that Kingdom and God Himself. None of those who took part in the requiem services could entertain such a belief. Therefore, their services for Brezhnev were acts of hypocrisy and falsehood, into which the entire hierarchy, clergy and laity were drawn.

"The Patriarchate strives to combine the principles of the Orthodox Faith with the principles of Marxist materialism, contrary to the warning of the holy Apostle Paul. It seeks theological justification for a ministry of a peace which is full of falsehood, between the free nations and communism. The purely political task of inspiring opposition in free countries to their arming to defend themselves against communist aggression is accorded a religious basis almost dogmatic in character. What the Patriarchate of Moscow is doing in this regard is clergy contrary to the instruction of the Apostle Paul 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?' (II Cor. 6: 14-15).

"All of these manifestations, the entire policy of compromise in the name of the propaganda of the Soviet Union, together with an ecumenism which extends to association of heretics with the upper hierarchy, has set upon the Patriarchate of Moscow the seal of the betrayal of Orthodoxy. In view of this, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia again declares that it can have no communion with the present hierarchy of Moscow."

7.) Concerning the liturgical use of foreign languages, the following resolution was adopted:

"With the course of time and the growth of new generations, the knowledge of the Russian language and the understanding of Church Slavonic is gradually being lost, which calls forth the use of the language of the local country. However, the Western languages, which have developed outside the Orthodox Church and its culture, are not always able to convey accurately the meaning of a number of Slavonic and Greek expressions in the prayers and the Scriptures. For this reason one must value the preservation of the liturgical languages of the Orthodox nations, Slavonic and Greek, as far as such is practically possible.

"Inasmuch as it is natural for an Orthodox person to be concerned for the preservation of tradition and accepted order, this is also expressed in the case of liturgical language, the moreso since in the given instance there may also be associated national sensibilities. On the other hand, parishioners not acquainted with the Slavonic or Greek tongues need the opportunity to understand the divine services in their own languages. The Church's task in this is to show tact in gradually permitting services in other languages. Haste in this matter can severely damage the spiritual life of the faithful. In the light of this, when he senses in his parish the desire of a part of the parishioners to introduce linguistic changes in the services, the rector must report all circumstances to the diocesan bishop and introduce such changes only with his approval.

"Steps for the introduction of the local language may be the following:
"(1.) Confession in their native language for those who do not know Russian.

- "(2.) Certain litanies, and a sermon in two languages.
- "(3.) The reading of the Epistle and Gospel in two languages.
- "(4.) The intoning of certain exclamations.
- "(5.) In case of need, the celebration of the entire service in the local language on certain days.

8.) Deliberating on the question of the preparation of candidates for the priesthood and the difficulties sometimes encountered in sending such to study at Holy Trinity Seminary, the Council adopted the suggestion of Bishop Gregory to ask the administration of the Seminary to prepare complete sets of textbooks, so that the diocesan administrations might order them and candidates might undergo the course of study under the supervision of their diocesan bishops, for which courses may be organized at each cathedral.

9.) To the question as to what restrictions there may be on a wedding banquet when marriages are performed on Wednesdays or Fridays, the Council resolved "to explain that we cannot alter the ancient rules of the Russian Church with regard to the days on which marriages are permitted to be celebrated; but it would be well if on such days there were lenten food at the wedding banquet."

10.) With regard to the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, the following resolution was adopted:

"The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, like all Orthodox, has from of old believed that the Lord has established only one true Church on earth, which is, in the words of Canon 68 of the Council of Carthage, 'the only Mother of Christians', and in harmony with the Apostle Paul confesses that there is 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Eph. 4:5).

"The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia does not take part in the World Council of Churches, inasmuch as the latter attempts to present as some sort of Christian unity that which in fact is merely a amalgamation of various dogmatic opinions which differ profoundly one from another. It also cannot agree to the utilization of Christianity for political aims directed under the considerable influence of the U.S.S.R., supposedly in the name of peace, toward removing any sort of opposition to Communist aggression, which everywhere entails the persecution of religion, deprivation of freedom, terrorism, and the disruption of citizens' peaceful lives. In the name of this false peace, the Christian churches contribute money with which terrorist organizations are subsidized.

"Atheistic Communism in Russia, beginning with 1917, has led to [the slaughter] of millions of victims for their faith and to the closure of a countless multitude of churches.

"The actions of the World Council of Churches, as has recently been documented, threaten the rest of the as yet free world with the same tribulations, in the event of the victory of Communism.

"29 July/11 August 1983."

11.) With regard to the report of the Finance Commission, the following resolution was adopted:

"Having familiarized itself in detail with the work of the Synod of Bishops and its economic position, the Council of Bishops sees that its sources of income have hitherto been insufficient to meet its current needs. In view thereof, the Council of Bishops decrees:

"(1.) To take up a collection in all the parishes of our Church and simultaneously to publish in all ecclesiastical magazines an appeal for contributions for the general renovation of the Synodal Residence Building.

"(2.) To send to all parishes in North America decrees that all parishes are obligated to purchase candles exclusively from the Synod Candle

Works. Those parishes which do not purchase their candles at all, or only buy them in part, from the Synod Candle Works, must contribute three percent of their income from the sale of candles.

"(3.) To remind [our institutions] about the tax in benefit of the Synod, in the amount of \$20.00, on each new grave in all cemeteries belonging to our Church.

"(4.) To exact a duty on all documents issued in all the parishes of our Church, authenticating them with a special stamp in the amount of \$2.00.

"(5.) To exact, in benefit of the Synod, 20% of the fees charged in each divorce case processed in the various dioceses.

"(6.) All publishing concerns of our Church are obliged to provide the Synod Bookstore with ten copies of each new book, magazine or paper icon."

12.) Resolution on the Elevation of the Spiritual Level of the Flock:

"(1.) Annually to convoke pastoral conferences in each diocese; and this year, at such a conference, to inform the pastors of the resolutions of this Council of Bishops.

"(2.) To convoke youth conferences which are likewise and in general for all of the flock. Not only to deliver lectures at these conferences, with which the organizers [of such conferences] are too often carried away, but to draw attention to questions which ought to be raised; for many of the faithful have stored up in their hearts many questions, for which they have been unable to obtain Orthodox answers. Conferences should have more the character of prayerful pilgrimages than mere conventions.

"(3.) To introduce into the divine services the teachings of the holy fathers, the lives of the saints, [accounts of] miraculous events, and to distribute leaflets on such subjects.

"(4.) To remind all, by a special instruction or epistle or sermon, of the proscription in the sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and the Ecumenical Councils, regarding the prohibition of men wearing women's clothing and women wearing men's clothing, explaining in detail the reasons for this prohibition and the ultimate opposition to God, the Creator of all order, inherent in the violation of these rules.

"(5.) To remind everyone with precision and in detail as to why it is essential to fast, presenting the teaching on fasting not only as abstinence, but as a means of bringing man closer to God. In the same sense, always to speak of prayer and confession.

"(6.) To remind all pastors that during their visits to the homes of the faithful, they should avoid all worldly topics, and strive ever to speak of things spiritual.

"(7.) To publish the commentaries of St. Theophylactus [the Bulgarian] on the holy Gospel and the Epistles."

13.) The Consecration of Bishop Innocent (Petrov)

By resolution of the Council of Bishops, dated 8/21 August, there took place in the Skete of the Transfiguration, in Mansonville, the consecration of Archimandrite Innocent (Petrov) as bishop of Asuncion, vicar for the Diocese of Argentina. His Grace, Bishop Innocent (formerly the widowed archpriest John Petrov) was consecrated by their Graces, Archbishops Athanasius, Vitaly and Laurus.

14.) On the basis of the statement of His Grace, Archbishop Seraphim of Caracas as to his inability to administer his diocese any more, due to the declining state of his health, the Council resolved: "After he is freed from [his duties with regard to] the see of Caracas & Venezuela by the Synod, Archbishop Seraphim may remain in retirement in San Diego, retaining the right to participate in the Councils of Bishops."

15.) At the suggestion of Archbishop Vitaly, it was resolved to reinstitute publication of Church Life, with all churches obligated to subscribe at the rate of \$12.00 per annum.

16.) In accordance with established tradition, immediately following the conclusion of the sessions of the Council of Bishops an extended session of the Synod of Bishops was held. This took place on 30 July/12 August.

At the suggestion of the diocesan bishops, the following clergymen have been rewarded for their particularly diligent service to the Holy Church:

Hegumen Sergius (Kindyakov), a cleric of the Diocese of Canada, with the rank of archimandrite.

Hieromonk Hilarion (Kapral) of Holy Trinity Monastery, with the Synodal gold cross.

Archpriest Sergius Ivanov, a cleric of the Diocese of Argentina, with the palitsa.

Liubov Ivanovna Fleisher, chanter of the same diocese for many years standing, who carries out her duties at the Holy Protection Church in Asuncion, Paraguay, is awarded with a gramata of the President of the Synod of Bishops.

Archpriest Peter Semovskikh, a cleric of the Diocese of Australia & New Zealand, is awarded the palitsa.

The priest Sergius Gutsalenko, a cleric of the Diocese of Venezuela, is elevated to the rank of archpriest.

Archpriest Philaret Astrakhansky, a cleric of the Diocese of Western America, is awarded a gramata of the Synod of Bishops for collecting a considerable amount towards the construction of a church in San Francisco.

At the suggestion of Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, the following awards have been conferred:

Archpriest Alexander Kargon, with the jeweled cross.

Priest Nicholas Lopatiuk is elevated to the rank of archpriest.

Deacon Nicholas Semenov is elevated to the rank of protodeacon.

Abbess Magdalena of the Lesna Convent is awarded the jeweled cross.

Archpriest Vladimir Shishkoff, a cleric of the Diocese of Eastern America, is awarded the jeweled cross.