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**PRE-CONCILIAR EPISTLE FROM THE FIRST HIERARCH OF THE ROCOR, METROPOLITAN VITALY TO:  
ALL THE MOST REVEREND BISHOPS, THE CLERGY OF ALL DEGREES, AND PIOUS LAY PEOPLE**

By the mercy of God our Church has already lived for eighty years beyond the borders of Russia, with our episcopate, clergy and laypeople being dispersed throughout the whole world. Our dioceses with their churches and parishioners exist in every country of the free world. Proper ecclesiastical order reigns everywhere, manifested in the regular prayerful life of our Divine services. The most lawful Patriarch of Russia, Tikhon, who was lawfully and freely elected to this highest office in the hierarchy of Russia, blessed all of us who left the borders of our fatherland and gave a directive (No.362) on the basis of which a new Church administration was established outside Russia. Patriarch Tikhon himself, for his disobedience to the Communist Party at that time, was condemned to die a martyr's death. Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) became the first leader of this Church. He was succeeded by Metropolitan Anastassy and then Metropolitan Philaret, and now I, Metropolitan Vitaly, despite my unworthiness, am the fourth Metropolitan. Thus the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia possesses a canonical Apostolic succession or, to put it more simply, the Divine Grace of the Holy Spirit, flowing throughout the centuries from our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and the Holy Apostles, to our own hierarchy; and this will continue until this world ends with the dread Second Coming of the Great Judge, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

In order to live this short earthly life of ours correctly and righteously, we must be in the True Church of Christ. Here and here alone are imparted to all of us this Divine Grace of the Holy Spirit through the Holy Sacraments - Baptism, Chrismation, Repentance, and Communion of the Holy Body and Blood of Our Savior, Jesus Christ. And to the true Church of Christ it was promised by her Saviour Himself, that she would be invincible to her very last day of existence of the earth and of the whole human race.

We must ourselves understand, and also declare for all to hear, that since 1927, when Metropolitan Sergius signed his lamentable "declaration", and up to this present day, our Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia has not had and does not have any communion in prayer with the Moscow Patriarchate, which is nothing other than uncanonical creation of the former Soviet regime. By the same token we do not have spiritual communion with a single other autocephalous Orthodox Church which lives its spiritual and liturgical life according to the new calendar. What liturgical communion can we have, when we are still fasting, but they are celebrating the Nativity of Christ by the new calendar? According to our calendar we are praying to one saint, while the new calendarists in their way are praying to a completely different saint. In other words, any kind of communion has been destroyed, both in prayer and also even in the sacraments.

And so I, as First Hierarch, am calling upon all of you to remain forever faithful to our Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and not to be confused by those appeals which we are all hearing more and more often that we should unite and concelebrate with others in the name of loudly proclaimed "brotherly love" when we are living, in that which is most important to us - our Divine Services - according to different calendars, and living a different spiritual life? Let us ponder the meaning of the most important phrase "Divine Service" which is to say, "serving God" and then we will understand that in fact we are serving God Himself in different ways.

Through out the eighty years of the existence of our Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia we have not made one step into any dubious spiritual byways. No doubtful "teachings" or errors have come from our Church and our "Credo" - "I believe in One God . . ." which is sung at each Divine Liturgy, remains our unsullied faith, by which we live, and through which we dare to hope to share in the "life of age to come". Amen.

August 1/14, 2000

Metropolitan Vitaly

**DECLARATION OF THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH REGARDING "SCHISMATIC" ROCOR**

In the has issue of the Church News (No.5) for month of June, on request of Metropolitan Vital we have published his declaration regarding relationship with the Serbian Orthodox Church, dated July 18/31, 1999.

While totally ignoring wishes of the First Hierarch, on the holiday of St. John of San Francisco, the three Hierarch of the ROCOR (Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco and Bishops Alexander of South America and Cyril of Seattle concelebrated with the Serbian Bishop John with his clergy.

By now it became known that in connection with an effort by Moscow Patriarchate to seize our St. Nicholas church in Bari, a Serbian clergyman, Fr. Nicholas Todorovich, who temporarily served as a rector in that church, was removed from that post due to insistence of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Ms. Olga Mitrenin, a member of the editorial committee of the bulletin "Vertograd Inform" basing her information on "Information Bulletin" of the Department of External Ecclesiastical Relations of the MP (N 3, 2000, pp.51-52) parts of correspondence between Ridiger and the Serbian Patriarch Paul regarding temporary service of a Serbian cleric in the Church Abroad.

The report says that: "His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow and All Russia wrote to His Holiness Patriarch Pavle of Serbia, asking him to clarify the situation that has been created, which violated the canonical structure of the Orthodox Church, insofar as the pastoral service of a clergyman of the Serbian Patriarchate was taking place in a schismatic ecclesiastical structure having no communion with any Local Orthodox Church".

The Serbian Patriarch Paul replied to Ridiger with a letter in which he expressed the opinion of his Synod regarding the "schismatics". In this letter he declares: "The Sacred Hierarchical Synod of our Holy Church has forbidden their Graces, the Diocesan Bishops, to give any kind of canonical permission to priests to depart their jurisdiction of the above-mentioned "church". We hope that they will stick to this.

We are sorry that such a thing could have taken place, and we hope that this incident will in no way spoil the old age good brotherly relations that have existed throughout the course of our united history.

In this hope, we beseech Your Holiness and the Most Holy Russian Orthodox Church, which is so dear to us, (to forgive) our oversight, which took place in the city of Bari, and not to consider it to be a sin. We assure you that such an unpleasant incident will not be repeated.

Your Holiness knows the brotherly and Christian relations that the Serbian Orthodox Church and people had towards Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kiev and the bishops, and Russian people who came to us in flight from the violence of communists in 1918. This brotherly relationship continued only until, after the fall of communists, the representatives of the Russian Church Abroad started to spread their priesthood unto the territory of Russia, thereby violating the canonical authority of the Russian Patriarchate. The sacred Synod has more than once directed its

protests to the leadership of the Russian Church Abroad in America and demanded that it cease from such actions since they are anticononical and worthy of every condemnation".

Since the time when the Serbian Church bent to demands of communist Tito and actively entered into the Ecumenical movement and is member of it to the present day, and the Serbian Patriarch Herman ( a predecessor of Paul) was even one of the honorary presidents of the WCC, Metropolitan Philaret on numerous occasions expressed his dissatisfaction to some of his Hierarchical brethren , who were guided by their former sentimental feelings towards Serbs and reproached them for concelebrations with ecumenists.

Now, the Hierarchs of the ROCOR, against their wishes will have to discontinue their concelebrations with the Serbian ecumenists, but not as result of their zealously for purity of Orthodoxy, but due to an well deserved insult. Unfortunately, this happens not in an individual manner regarding only those bishops who concelebrated with Serbian ecumenists, but it puts a stain of disgrace upon the whole Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

It is amazing that the encirclement of Patriarch Paul permitted such a cringed letter, which discredits the honor of the autocephalous Serbian Church, to be signed by him and even made public!

## "THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH" OF BISHOP MICHAEL OF TORONTO IN PODOLSK

During this trip to Russia by the Editor in Chief of the Church Ness, among other places visited, there was one ROCOR parish in Moscow (not during service) and a trip to Podolsk, during the Saturday's vigil service, where is located the "cathedral church" of Bishop Michael of Toronto.

His Grace Bishop Michael (who in Canada is only one of the vicars of Metropolitan Vitaly) – became in Russia a ruling Bishop for no less than altogether three dioceses: Moscow, St. Petersburg and even . . . Suzdal!

The church in Moscow is a middle-sized room in a large apartment house. Part of it is separated for sanctuary by a slam, but lovingly made altar screen. Yet, a big couch, standing in the back of the room, spoils the impression. Fr. Tikhon Kasoushin said that he serves here only on Thursdays and some 12 young people attend these services. Otherwise, he is a rector of a community in Alexino town in Tula region and he has to travel there for quite a distance.

The church in the outskirts of Podolsk is towering on a very beautiful place, almost at a precipice, at which bottom there is a huge pond. The church is so far away from the center of the city, that one has the impression, it is in the village and not a city. Next to the church there is a beautiful brick house of Mr. Melekhov, who is a churchwarden and owner of a cement company. He also constructed this spacious church in 1998 from very big logs. Around the property, there is a tall metal fence.

To the church and house there leads a several hundred yards a very narrow paved road, so that a driver of a large American car would have to be very cautious not to slip downhill into the pond or to touch fences, protecting numerous vegetable gardens. The gates to the church and house were locked, so that our driver had to drive backwards for quite a bit of part of this road, until he found a spot wide enough to be able to maneuver the car to proper direction.

It seems, that there are some misunderstandings between the builder of the church and church administration, because we had to walk alongside a solid tall fence at a very narrow path and where at the end of it, happened to be a door leading to the church and the house. Two men approached us and asked where are we going. Days before, one could park a car in the church/house yard and easily ride out.

In the middle of the church there was an hierarchal cathedra, covered with the carpet, but . . . the icon screen, as such actually doe not exist. There is only an unpainted frame made of boards 2x4" with no icons, except for 2 or 3 hanging over the future Royal Gates.

It is strange to see, that during more than two years time, His Grace Bishop Michael didn't feel it is necessary to have even an inexpensive icon screen in his "cathedral". It is doubtful that he would not be able to collect a few hundred dollars in his own Canada and cover the frame with plywood and hang on it a few paper icons.

The very first thing Archbishop Valentine does after he gets from the authorities a ruined church – erects an inexpensive icon screen, so that the services may begin and only then the church is decorated with icons and in some cases, even the frescoes.

There were some five or six women in the church, about four people on the clerics (also women) and one man.

We hardly happened to enter the church which is built in the form of a cross, when one elderly woman rushed toward us to explain, that in the church women stand on the left side and men on the right and asked us to get to the left side. The internal poverty and also this thrust made very unfavorable impression, specially, because in our group was a matoushka of an Moscow Patriarchate priest.

As well as last year, here again one had to listen to complains about His Grace Bishop Michael, for doing absolutely nothing in order to secure the registration of his dioceses. This procedure in Russia takes enormously long time, while all the registrations are to be done within six weeks. There is a danger to loose the already existing church property.

The "Independent Newspaper. Religions" (Nezavisinaya Gazeta. Religii) in the issue #14 (60) of July 26 published an account regarding the re-registrations of Orthodox Churches as well of Christian and other religions by Anna Titova. In it, by the way, she mentions that the Moscow Patriarchate has almost completed the registration of her dioceses and parishes, but "regarding other Russian Orthodox Churches – the best situation in this regard is by the Russian Orthodox Church ( former name "Russian Orthodox Free Church"). According to information given by Bishop Theodore of Suzdal's diocese, actually there are no problems with the re-registration. As stated to the correspondent of the "Keston" by Fr. Michael Ardov, a rector of the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas and all the New martyrs in Moscow, their church passed the re-registration by re-registering first the dioceses and then the parishes. There was issued a standard Statute, which the local judicial authorities asked to make minor changes. But, regarding the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCOR) the diocese of Ishim and Siberia is NOT registered and accordingly, its parishes were not re-registered. According to opinion of Fr. Alexis Blagov, a clergyman of the ROCOR diocese 'simply no one seriously approached this problem, since our Bishop does not reside in Russia. (Underlined by us, ChN). According to Secretary of Bishop of Ishim and Siberia Yevtkhy (Kourochkin), a ROCOR diocese, the Bishop actively makes an effort to solve the problem pf re-registration of his some 40 parishes, but 'the problem is that several parishes are still not registered, therefore the diocese is not registered, and the existing parishes are not re-registered, since the diocese is not registered'. This is not a simple situation by those Russian old-believers" writes the author of this report.

It would be much more proper to state that non-believers have absolutely nothing to do with all of this. The main problem is that the ROCOR imagined itself to be a Supreme Administrative Center for whole Russia and took upon itself a problem, which it could not solve without knowledge of local situations and laws even it would sincerely like to do it. And here, as it is obvious, even that wish is nonexistent.

In other words, all the dioceses of the ROCOR in Russia, like the Ishim-Siberia diocese, and also dioceses of Moscow, Petersburg and Suzdal under jurisdiction of Bishop Michael are until present moment ARE NOT REGISTERED!

There was information that in the nearest future Bishop Michael plans to go to Russia and he will then bring the necessary documentation to fulfill the registration. . .

No information is given in this article about the registration of diocese and parishes of Archbishop Lazarus and Agathangel.

### **PRIEST LEONOD KALININ RESPONSES TO A. SCHATILOFF'S LETTER**

To my great surprise Moscow Patriarchate's priest Leonid Kalinin reacted to a letter addressed to him in the Church News #4(86) by a two pages long letter.

Fr. Kalinin writes that he takes upon himself to answer my letter, since Fr. Edelstein didn't answer me. Regarding both of my letters addressed to Moscow clerics, Fr. Leonid believes that they are "very similar to letters of schismatical old-believers: they breathe vengeance, pretense to hold truth in the very last instance, judgment and absence of Christ's love".

No matter how much Fr. Kalinin wants to justify the Sergians' betrayal, he did not succeed because all his letter consists of totally unsubstantiated and false arguments and deliberately misinterpretation of well known historical facts which I have stated.

So he writes: "you gravely sin before your conscience, when you write, that after His Holiness Patriarch Sergius (Stragorodsky) 'all the succeeding Patriarchs' (your quotation marks) were appointed by the godless authorities and all of them, as such, according to the 30 Apostolic rule are unlawful".

You sin, because you perfectly well know in what most difficult situation was the Church of Russia and accuse her knowing that she was under outer vigilant (underlined by Fr. Kalinin) control of the godless government".

And right away, contradicting his own words, Fr. Kalinin responding to my statement that there was a difference between the pagan persecutors of the Church and Soviet atheists since pagans never attempted to manipulate internal liberty of the Church and persecuted Christians as their political enemies only, Fr. Kalinin blasts me with a whole tirade that supposedly the Church at Stalin's times was internally totally free, even more free than under the tsar's regime and that, "when Stalin lifted his disfavor toward the Church, he didn't demand any distortion of the faith, he did not demand renouncement of Christ, he did not demand the violation of the secrecy of confession or something like this". It means, we should believe that "Drozdots, Abbats, Mikhailovs of Restovrators" and number of others in the cassocks served in the KGB on their own inspiration, patriotic impulse and a free will. And when they violated the Orthodox decision of their own Council of Bishops in the 1948, which condemned ecumenism, they on their own free will decided to change their mind and become members of the ecumenical movement!

When objecting to my phrase, that the Moscow Patriarchate is a political successor of Lenin and Stalin, Fr. Kalinin declares against all the obvious facts: "You gravely sin, when perverting the very essence of the Church, which ALWAYS (as written by Fr. Kalinin) was outside the politics, even if she participates in this or that political events". It seems, Fr. Kalinin is so busy with pastoral activities that he has no time even to read the newspapers or watch news on TV. An it is worth it! May be then he would not resort to such blunt lies.

In spite of Fr. Kalinin's arrogant tone and rude misrepresentations of well-known historical facts, he did not manage to beat any one of my "cards".

To those, who would be interested in receiving a copy of his letter (in Russian language) I would be happy to send this far from convincing and not too clever composition.

### **SUCH IS THE PARISH**

A Russian newspaper "Time For News" on June 9<sup>th</sup> published the following article by Archpriest Michel Ardov, the rector of the Tsar Nicholas II and all the New Martyrs on the Golovine's cemetery in Moscow.

Ten years ago I still was a cleric of the Moscow Patriarchate and ministered a village parish. The news about the election of a new Patriarch greatly and greatly encouraged all of us. It was a very special period, the country was under the reconstruction. Magnificently in a stately manner there was celebrated the millennium of baptism of Russia. It seemed to us that in the future for the Church there opens a spacious road and that the new Patriarch and new circumstances for the Church will allow to solve were, very numerous problems. We expected, that there will be established a canonical order of administrating the Church according to regulations of the Local Council of 1917-1918, that besides the Synod of Bishops there will be also created a Church Council. And the leadership will be indeed subordinate to the Local Councils. It seemed to us, that Hierarchs and clerics of the Moscow Patriarchate finally will be able to free themselves from the protection of KGB and party members, will repent of servility toward communists, were the obedient tools in their hands. We expected, finally, that the most odious hierarchs and clerics, who disgraced themselves with canonical violations and personal transgressions, would be removed.

Not one of those hopes did materialize. There even was no effort made to repent of lies, servility and flattery toward tyrant Stalin. When it was published in the press that clerics and hierarchs were in service of KGB, in the Patriarchy there was created a committee to investigate those cases, but non of her works were ever made public. I believe, this committee does not exist by now. The ROC, as before, remains a "pocket" Church for the State and is administrated by a sort of "Metropolitan bureau", which has its sort of general-secretary – Patriarch. This organ is not accountable to any one, it is forming itself and decides everything by itself. Until today, there is no ecclesiastical court created and this is a very daily problem. Since 1990 not once there was convened a Local Council, although, according to statutes it has to be convened at least once in 5 years. For year 2000 there was scheduled a Council, but since the "metropolitan bureau" is afraid it might not stay in power, it was cancelled.

To say a truth, during those last ten years the Moscow Patriarchate indeed received a substantial liberty of which she could not even dream during communist times. The churches, monasteries and Sunday schools are opening. There were some 50 churches in Moscow during Bolsheviks times.

Now there are 300 or 400 of them. Very often the bishops and clerics, priests and deacons are unworthy of their ranks. They are canonically unusable people, morally defective. The prestige of Patriarchate is badly shaken. People are irritated, when they see limousines of hierarchs, hear of the scandalous duty free trades with tobacco and alcohol, the participation of the ROC in the oil, banks and diamond businesses. To please the authorities, Patriarch rewards quite odious people. At the same time, there is chatter about the spiritual rebirth - one has to throw dust into the eyes of politicians, so that they more appreciate the Church's support. In Moscow, at the Paschal night there are some 150.000 people in the churches - it is less than 1% of capitol's inhabitants. So, about what sort of rebirth there is a matter? Looking at the Patriarchate, people do not go to the churches. Hopelessness of this situation was revealed to me a few years ago and in 1993 I left Patriarchate and joined another jurisdiction.

At the end of this short article, it is stated that Fr. Michael Ardiv is a cleric of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church.

Fr. Michael Ardiv, who as a rector of the very first church in Moscow, dedicated to Tsar Nicholas and all the New Martyrs, just recently gave an interview to a TV company which was interested of his opinion in connection with expected canonization of the Royal Family by the Moscow Jubilee Council.

## **ABOUT THE CHURCH IN THE VILLAGE OF BORISOVSKOYE, VLADIMIR'S REGION**

The village of Borisovskoye is mentioned in documents for the first time in the year 1328. this means it is at least 672 years old. The center of this village is decorated by the huge brick church., which is a successor of the few, which burned down during the past centuries. Unfortunately, during the godless communist reign, this church was severely damaged.

Having two sections: one in honor of St. Basil the Great and another - St. Nicholas the Wondermaker, this church was given to congregation a few years ago, after a prolonged petition and assistance on part of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church. With the substantial help of good people, this church was restored and at a present time it has a decent icon screen and even the restorations of former frescoes started in the former "academical" style.

One Russian artist and a iconographer took upon himself to finish this difficult task. The space to paint makes 1,700 square meters. This man is a teacher in an art school and for practicing, there are working free of charges some 10 young students, who during the summer time were living in several tents on the church's property. Yet, there is a financial problem to continue this work, because the church lacks sufficient funds to purchase paints. Any one, willing to help this project, can send his donation to the Church News and it will be safely forwarded by us to the rector, Fr. Arcady Makovetsky.

This church is also a cathedral church for Bishop Theodore, the right hand of Archbishop Valentine.

## **THE CLOUDS OVER THE FAITHFUL IN UKRAINE ARE THICKENING MORE AND MORE**

The situation of Orthodox people in the so called Ukraine, one can say, is getting more confusing and tragic with every month. Ignoring the feelings and wished of the Orthodox people, the politicians civil and in cassocks, do decide behind their backs the future of Orthodoxy in Ukraine.

On one hand the Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma, encouraged by fanatical separatists constantly interferes with the Church affairs and makes attempts to uproot in this area The Orthodoxy, as well as Russian Language, and on the other hand - the main traitor of Orthodoxy, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew decided to fish in the murky waters. here might be created an organization "Untied Ukrainian Church". This assemblage, according to program, should include: the dioceses according to agreement made between deputy premier of Ukraine Nicholas Zhulinsky and Bartholomew, it is expected that already in month of August the Moscow Patriarchate, which exist in Ukraine as an autonomous church "Orthodox Ukrainian Autocephalous Church" and "Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kievan Patriarchate". Those two last ones are headed by the self ordained adventurers and the very last one is Philaret Denisenko, who was defrocked and anathemized by the MP, but shortly after that proclaimed himself to be a "Kievan Patriarch". Denisenko plans to convene an "All Ukraine Bishops Council" which, according to his plans has to elect a Kievan Patriarch who will be approved on the Council in Moscow. All this assemblage of the disgraceful person is to be united under the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew!

Preparing a way for the next unprecedented violation of canons, Bartholomew declared that he considers Ukraine to be his "canonical territory" and that the unification of the Kievan Metropolia in 1686 to the Russian Patriarchate was, supposedly, uncanonical

The Brotherhood of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Crimea sent an appeal to the "Most Holy Patriarch Alexis II, the Holy Synod and whole fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church" with the following contents:

"Brothers and Sisters!

Today by us in the Ukraine is decided the future fate of the Orthodoxy!!!

The secular powers in Ukraine and the traitors within the Church are making real a "Plan of Autocephaly", which includes a separation of the Ukrainian Church from the Moscow Patriarchate (autocephaly); the union of all the Christian branches (Uniates, autocephals, Protestants, Philaraits and others) into one Ukrainian Local Church under the jurisdiction of Constantinople, than Rome and finally - antichrist.

Ignored were numerous protests of Orthodox communities \_ picketing of the Council which was discussing the matter of autocephaly, church processions; letters to Patriarch and Metropolitan in the Orthodox press. WE HAVE NO CHOICE!

We have to unite and stand up to defend our Faith and do all possible that this fight for the Orthodoxy would encompass the whole Holy Russia!

A Bishop, priest, lay person, who participates in the anti-canonical adventure - are the traitors of Orthodoxy!

Beside this excellent appeal, a group of Orthodox Christians in Kharkov appealed also to Alexis Ridiger and President Putin, pleading for Christ' sake to help them because by the year 2001 "Against our wish and behind our backs there is in preparation the betrayal of Orthodoxy. The aggressive Ukrainian nationalists, secular powers, the betrayals of our Church, the rukhs, self-ordainers who are opposed to the Faith and representatives of masonry aggressively prepare by the year 2001 the unification of all the churches into one Ukrainian church, to be under authority of Bartholomew I and Roman Pope John Paul. Into this adventure they forcibly try to involve also our Orthodox Church. Actually, this is their main purpose, since the Russian language is declared to be a foreign language!

Totally shocking is the fact that our Metropolitans keep us in an absolute ignorance. Not a word comes out regarding this matter. About the forthcoming spiritual and living catastrophe we find out from one to another, but not from our Hierarchs and priests and we by ourselves are warning each other. The ground is falling under our feet and we are like sheep, having no spiritual directives. It is people, who make priests face such facts and not the other way around. (Underlined by us, Ch. N.)

Many of the Church's children are disoriented and do not understand what is going on, where is the truth; they are afraid to sign a letter.

And yet, the schism within the one Orthodox Church, actually happened. The Ukrainian Church got her autonomy to please secular authorities and nationalists.

But we the people, - the very Body of Christ – never wanted it. It is our bleeding wound.

In some of our churches in the periphery, the services are conducted in Ukrainian language, the name of the Patriarch Alexis II in general is not commemorated during the service. At the end of the service a hymn is sung: "Great and one God, preserve the Ukraine" . . . so, we are already sort of an autocephaly.

This creates bewilderment and bitterness. Where are we being led to?! What is going on?! Who will stop it?!

There are at present in Ukraine hundreds and thousands of various religions and churches. All is legal. There are only no Russian Orthodox churches for Russian speaking people. Why is it so? After all it is unjust, this pinches our needs and constitutional rights.

In order that we would not fall into any sort of autocephaly, we tearfully plead to you, Your Holiness, for the Christ's sake, for sake of Holy Theotokos, please interfere for us and reinstate us in the direct subordination to you of Russian Orthodox churches in Kharkov as well as in its region, so as to prevent disagreements and feuds among us.

Our churches were built by the whole community, with no regards to nations. This is why a part of the churches should be given, according laws of God and conscience, also to Russian speaking inhabitants.

Dear President of Russia, Vladimir Vladimirovich!

In case we are persecuted in Ukraine and have to flee our native places for sake of the God's truth, do help us as a Christian during this exit from Ukraine. We plead to you to defend us for the Christ's sake in case of need. We are absolutely defenseless! Help!!!

As a Christ's warrior, support our Patriarch and all of us according to enclosed material".

With this heart-breaking letter of Russian Orthodox people in Ukraine, there is enclosed in the Ukrainian slang a declaration of a leader of the "Christian missions comradeship of a Foundation of Spiritual Unity of Ukraine", Mikola Kravecj, in which "in order to find a way out of the religious crisis , which unfavorably influences the whole existence of Ukrainian state, the Foundation for Spiritual Unity of Ukraine offers the following steps:

1. Ukraine, by the year 2000 has to officially ask the Pope John Paul II and His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I to visit Ukraine at their convenience'.

A second paragraph proposes that the President of Ukraine "as a person elected by the Ukrainian nation to take upon himself a leading role of an initiator for consolidation of Ukrainian problems and by the year 2001 convene All-Ukrainian united Council with the participation of representatives of the Ecumenical Orthodoxy which will elect a First Hierarch of the United Ukrainian Church with the Patriarchal administration in the St. Sophia of Kiev".

A third paragraph envisions that the Supreme Council of Ukraine, as the supreme authority of Ukraine, will act without violating democratic principles toward representatives of other religions and that the government will unite around this new patriarchal center.

Unfortunate people in Ukraine have no idea, that according to the Russian newspaper "Segodnia" (Today) of July 3, in Switzerland (Chambesie) "in the mid of July there should happen an event, unprecedented in the Orthodoxy: The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I and the president of the Moscow Patriarchate's Foreign Relations Department, Metropolitan Cyril will decide what to do with the Orthodoxy in Ukraine" (underlined by us, Ch. N.) . . . "One does not believe in the hundred percent appearance and compromising decision of the conflict: the hierarchy and the faithful of three churches (MP, UKP and UAC) have hard feelings against each other".

The newspaper "Radonzh" in # 11-12 (102) verifies that there was a meeting between Cyril of Smolensk and Ukrainian Kuchma at which the collocutors discussed the situation of united Ukraine. Also, during this meeting, "the collocutors discussed the ways for harmonization of relationships between the Orthodox jurisdiction, functioning on the territory of Ukraine"

According to the interview given to newspaper "Den" (A day) published in Kiev, the deputy-premier of Ukraine Zhulinsky said that "regarding this issue he had a conversation with the Constantinople's Patriarch Bartholomew. According to Zhulinsky Patriarch Bartholomew declared his intention to preside over the 'peacemaking' consultation and even recognize in the present ranks all the schismatical false bishops (underlined by us, Ch. N.) Patriarch Bartholomew also declared that he is ready to be a leader on the Ukrainian 'all-Orthodox council' , which, according to his idea should elect a Kievian Patriarch, and after that the Istanbul's First Hierarch promised to grant to Ukrainian church an autocephaly"

Knowing greediness of the Constantinople Patriarchate, there is no doubt, that Kuchma and Philaret himself (a main candidate for the role of patriarch) must have paid to Bartholomew quite some money for this unprecedented violation of the canons, by which a defrocked by the MP Denisenko would be recognized. Shortly after that he proclaimed himself a "patriarch of Kiev"! And also a substantial part of faithful will be torn away from the Russian Church.

The Ukrainian government quite openly supports self-ordained Denisenko and, as it is known now, they together with Bartholomew are preparing the expulsion of Russian Orthodoxy from Ukraine. All this is done under a "comely" reason to unite the arguing among themselves churches. According to newspapers information in the Ukraine there are some 8,500 Moscow Patriarchate parishes. Other "churches have substantially less.

As per newspaper's information, this news about the probable autocephaly 'sounded like thunder from the heaven'.

Bartholomew is known to be a mason of higher ranks and undoubtedly, at present he is fulfilling a profitable to the western governments a Masonic dream of long standing to dismember Russia.

On the grounds of church schisms the passions among people reached the dangerous measurement. According to newspaper "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" (New Russian Word) on August 24<sup>th</sup> , the head of MP in Ukraine Metropolitan Vladimir (Sabodan), should consecrate a just newly renovated Dormition church in Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, a day of proclamation of Ukraine's independence. The supporters of Philaret Denisenko declared that

they would be picketing whole ceremony of consecration and "prevent Moscow's agents to consecrate the church". Denisenko hopes to seize this church for himself.

The Ukrainian government at present made a compromising decision: the church remains (one should think only until the "Kievan Patriarch" is elected) in the hands of civil authorities and will not be transferred to none of the three arguing groups.

At present time, the poor Russian people in the Ukraine have not a single Orthodox Bishops upon whom they could depend as upon a true pastor: present there are only the hirelings by the powers which are hostile to the Church.

### ABOUT THE JUBILEE COUNCIL OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

Several years ago there were circulating news of a Local Council of the Moscow Patriarchate which was to be convened by the year 2000. Yet, in 1998 a newspaper "Rus Pravoslavnyaya" (Orthodox Rus) in issue #12 (18) made a sensational announcement, that the Patriarchate cancelled that Council. At that time the "own correspondent" of the newspaper expressed a reasonable assumption that the Moscow Patriarchate became frightened that it will be unable to control a huge amount of the delegates and will not be able to fight off the critique of the infallible Moscow's "administration"; there were expected strong demands to exit from the WCC, to canonize the Royal New Martyrs and a number of others and that there will be taken measures against immorality of various Hierarch and the clergy.

In a short while after the announcement of cancellation of the Local Council, there briefly passed a laughable motivation for it: it happened that the Moscow Patriarchate will not be able to find sufficiently large hall for such a convention of the Council!

In our Church News #2 (78) for March-April, we noted that according to the decision of the last MP Council, a future Local Council was to approve a "new statute for administrating the ROC". But, according to information given by the Rus Pravoslavnyaya it soon became known, that the church authorities hastily approved through the Justice Department its own variation of the Statutes, drafted privately, one may say – almost secretly!

Then, a bit more than a year ago, the Moscow Patriarchate announced that in the year 2000 she is going to have a "Jubilee Council", scheduled to open in mid of August. And indeed, it opened on August 13<sup>th</sup> and closed on 16<sup>th</sup>! A very powerful people's movement toward the canonization of the Royal New-Martyrs preceded the council.

There were also some who clearly opposed the glorification of the Royal Family, but according to the press, they were insignificant minority. As expected, among the active haters of the Russian historical past, in the leadership happened to be living in Russia Jews. An information bulletin, published by the Orthodox Christian News Service, Inc. of August 6<sup>th</sup> reported about the protests, declared by one of the chief Rabbis in Russia, Pinchas Goldschmidt and "Alexander Lakshin", a Jewish historian living in Moscow and specializing on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries of the Russian history. Both Jews accuse the Royal Family personally and the government of Tsar Nicholas II in particular – of the very fashionable acquisition of violently expressed "anti-Semitism". The Jews protested also in Italy against the declaration by Vatican of the "blessedness" of Pope Pious IX, who convened the First Vatican Council in 1869. This Pope is accused of luring a 6 year old Jewish boy and raising him as a Roman-Catholic.

It is interesting to note, that non of the Russians or even the Western Christians would ever discuss or evaluate who of the Jewish Rabbis would be included in the list of their "tsadiks" (saints), but the Jews come up with their protests not only in Russia in case of canonization of the New-Martyrs, but also strongly protest against proposed canonization of the Roman Pope Pius XII for his supposed lack of support to them during the Nazi regime.

The major Russian papers for at least a year published numerous letters signed by various groups addressed to Alexis Ridiger, asking for the canonization of the Royal Family.

One should think that in order to avoid something worse, the Moscow Patriarchate was forced to canonize the Royal Family, but excluded their faithful servants.

Newspaper "Vecherniyaya Moskva" (Evening Moscow) of August 14<sup>th</sup>, reporting some information about the Council writes quite openly: Hierarchs understand, that if they will not recognize Tsar as a saint, our Church will become in the line of schism. Monarchists, and among them half are Orthodox, will join the Church Abroad, where Nicholas II is long ago canonized".

In an interview published by the newspaper "NG. Religions" of May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000, #10 (56) and made by the reported Maxim Shevchenko, a member of the committee for canonization of the saints, archpriest George Mitrofanov said: "The servants will not be canonized. In the first place it is connected with the matter that if the perishing of the Royal Family very narrowly fits into the ancient tradition of the passion bearers – dukes and Lords, who accepted their guiltless end with the Christian humility, than the perishing of the tsar's servants, who just fulfilled their duty, not that is not impossible in the principle. But at the time being we are looking for a coincidental form for their glorification". (Underlined by us, Ch.N). From the memoirs of Dr. Botkin's daughter we know, that at moment of taking farewell of his family before leaving with the Royal Family, he parted with them for ever. The Patriarchy also totally ignores the ancient term of "druzhina" (prince's armed forces) which in Slavonic may have that meaning, but also a meaning of a spouse. Those Tsar's servants who stayed with the Royal Family perfectly well knew what are they doing and what consequences it will have for them.

The Committee also categorically renounced a possibility of the ritual murder, although for support of this opinion there a sufficient reasons, mainly the cabbalistic inscription found in the cellar where the Family was murdered. In no way and in no place it is mentioned that the Tsar-Martyr was an by God anointed monarch, as well as the other Russian Emperors.

On the place, where once stood the Ipatiev house, the Moscow Patriarchate proposed to build a church, but not in the name of Royal Martyrs, but . . . All the Saints! Now it became known that this diplomatic move by the MP is being postponed for indefinite time, because supposedly the archeologist have to establish the exact place of the cellar where the murder took place!

The journalist wanted to find out what effect will happen because of canonization of the Royal Martyrs and other Martyrs, who partially were canonized long ago by the Church Abroad. "Don't you think that the presence of common saints in the ROC of the Moscow Patriarchate might finally put an start for a fruitful dialogue between the ROC and it's branch abroad?" asked Shevchenko.

Archpriest Mitrofanov replied: " We would like this to happen and in this respect we try everything to activate this dialogue. Actually it is going on the level of individual Bishops, individual representatives of the clergy of the Church Abroad. They are quite favorably disposed toward the ROC in

Russia. But another matter is that as long as Metropolitan Vitaly presides over the Church hierarchy, I believe that even this canonization will not bring forth the cardinal changes toward the Moscow Patriarchate in the official policy of the Synod Abroad". (Underlined by us, Ch.N). Metropolitan Vitaly was born in 1910, it means he is nearly 90 years old and some Hierarchs (especially the one who favor union with MP, like Archbishop Mark) - already permit themselves to force their own will over the will of elderly First Hierarch of the ROCOR. One should remember only a scandalous apology letter, signed by the Metropolitan and forced from him by yelling at!

The Patriarchy decided on this Council to canonize from 700 to 860 martyrs. Into these lists, among the genuine holy martyrs and confessors is included a multitude of the purest sergianites who, in spite of Segrius' Declaration of loyalty to the Soviet government, never the less suffered in the mid of 30-ies, especially in 1937. But at that time, any kind of religion was persecuted and by the godless suffered not only sergianists and renovators, but Catholics, Protestants and even Jews as well. Reacting to the decision of the MP to canonize the Royal Family, the New York Times of August 15<sup>th</sup> notes the amount of victims of the godless communism. So, in 1937, there were 136,900 people arrested for their faith and 85,300 were killed by the NKVD (later KGB). In 1938 there were arrested 28,300 people and 21,500 of them were shot to death.

Before the opening of the "Jubilee Council" on July 19<sup>th</sup> there was a meeting of the Synod of Bishops of MP, which was taking place in the Holy Trinity Lava in Moscow. According to information from newspaper "NG. Religions" of July 26<sup>th</sup>, a journalist Oleg Nedoumov when informing of this meeting which approved the Council's Agenda, writes about so to say the main theme of the Council - the social doctrine: "It is not worth mentioning that the examination of the social doctrine is the main point in the Agenda of the future Council. The acceptance of it will become an unprecedented case in the history not only of the Russian Church, but also of other Orthodox Local Churches. If the Council will not promote this document, then also such decision might be called sensational, since to the preparation of this doctrine which lasted for several years, it was given a tremendous significance. Although by now, no one has any doubts that it will be successfully accepted".

In the Moscow's "Jubilee Council" participated 146 bishops, and it lasted only 3 days, while it accepted a multitude of very important resolutions. A document on the social doctrine alone had more than 100 pages.

A renown reporter Andrew Zolotov in the newspaper "Moskovskoye Vremia" of August 18<sup>th</sup> informs that although on the Agenda of the Council there were numerous themes, touching almost all aspects of contemporary live (pregnancies, homosexuality, divorces, nationalism, socialist globalization and so on) - all of them were approved after "deliberations" which lasted only one day!

An internet journal "Sobornost", under direction of Serge Chapnin in its information of August 16<sup>th</sup> sheds a light upon such and unheard of "success" of the Council's work. According to an interview given by Metropolitan of Voronezh and Lipetsk Methodius (with the cone name in KGB "Paul") on a question by the reporter "how do you evaluate the today's approval of the social doctrine and what is the most important part of it"? He replayed:

It is very important that this doctrine happened to be a united document which defines the relationship of the Church to many problems of social and political life. That this doctrine appeared - is very good, but at the same time it puts before us a multitude of questions, such as detailed to be worked out of social relations, of the church-government relations, or some canonical matters which are to be solved in this doctrine" . . .

Are not you confused that only three days were given to the Bishops to read this doctrine? The text is very complicated and there was plenty of work besides. I doubt that the Bishops read this document in details, comments the reporter.

Metropolitan Methodius explains: "To say frankly, to evaluate a work which was made within six years and in a working circumstances, certainly, is not a simple and easy task. Especially if there are to be introduces some recommendations and not just simply to say: " yes, it is good, and what is actually there, we will find out later". By all means in it there is some complication and difficulty, but never the less, this time which was given to us, and it was insufficient, let us frankly admit, - we managed to get acquainted with the contest as in whole".

Inevitably there comes the question: what prevented the members of this Council from approving beforehand prepared by the Synod documents instead of having a normal meetings and deliberation until all the points of Agenda would be deliberated and exhausted? All of this reminds of the method of the "administration" of the Moscow Patriarchate in the year 1961, when episcopate was gathered under quite different pretext, but unexpectedly found out that they are on the Council's meetings and had to sign a document that deprived all the parish priests of any responsibility and made them powerless figures in their parishes.

Regarding an interest of the reporter about the canonization of the Royal Martyrs, Metropolitan Methodius admitted that "The Council expressed the will of majority of faithful who expected the canonization".

An important question for the journalist was a decree about relationship with the heterodox. He was already informed, that for example, Bishop Benjamin of Vladivostok voted against the document, presented by the Theological Committee.

According to report of the Ecumenical Press International of August 23<sup>rd</sup> the document regarding Ecumenical matters, consisting of 20 pages, was composed by a small group of Bishops and presented to the Council for approval on the day of its opening!

A Catholic priest Igor Kovalevski characterized it as 'a very positive step'. The document stats that the ignoring the matter of searching of unity is to be considered as a sin. The document also encourages a research group and also the exchange of students by the theological schools and academies.

Metropolitan Methodius verified that if he is not mistaken, seven bishop restrained form the voting and one was against.

'You know, said the Metropolitan, it is normal, because there exists a justified distrust toward constant unanimous votes. This reminds of former times, when everything was unanimously approved. It is very good that Vladyka Benjamin and other members of the Council had their own opinion and they made an effort to express it".

Is not it that it was needed (or at this time permeated) to have a few critical voices in order to prove that all the regulations of this 'Jubilee Council' were totally free and not in any way dictated by the "administrative organ"?

A it further, when speaking of the report made by Metropolitan Philaret, the President of the Theological Committee regarding the relationship with the heretics, Metropolitan Methodius characterized it as "a serious report to Council".

Metropolitan Methodius also said that "the work of this section" was very tense, because "there were persistent and numerous speeches calling for reexamination of our participation in the WCC. In this connection, as was related by the Metropolitan Cyril and also told by His Holiness about it, there was created a inter-Orthodox committee which will reexamine the Orthodox participation in this international movement".

When quoting the announcement of a representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, priest Hilarion Alfeyev, the bulletin Ecumenical News International of August 9<sup>th</sup> reports: "The subject of inter-Christian relations is used by various groups (withing the church) as a bogey in partisan wars. In particular, it is used to criticise church leaders who, as is well known, have taken part in ecumenical activities over many years". According to Alfeyev's opinion, "Ecumenism was also being used by breakaway groups, such as the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and Old-Calendarists, to undermine people's trust in the church", therefore, there was a need 'for a clear document outlining the theological basis of the Russian Orthodox Church's attitude toward heterodoxy, i.e. the question of why we need and whether we need dialogue with non-Orthodox confessions, and if so which form this dialogue should take".

Alfeyev refused to answer a question if the Council will discuss the matter of participation of the MP in the WCC, but said that the Patriarchate feels obliged to continue negotiations with Protestant and Catholic representatives in the WCC and be a part of the ecumenical committee.

A staff member of the newspaper "NG. Religions" Vladimir Semenko in the article of July 12<sup>th</sup>, analyzing in details the report about the "social doctrine of the ROC" finishes it with a sentence: " along with a whole number of quite correct positions of the document, there is characteristic sort of a heart-heartedness. We are shown the front, but we are not allowed inside the building. During the sessions of the Bishops Council, when this document will be accepted, looking at it from the side, one doubts that this will result in an "perestroika".

The Newspaper "Segodnia" (August 14<sup>th</sup>, #178) published on its first page a short note entitled "The Council of compromises" with an undertitle "The Russian Orthodox Church agonizing in finding her place in the contemporary world".

The newspaper informs, that according to her knowledge, "the ROC for the first time in her history will accept a social conception and the basic principle of relationship with the heterodox as well as the church's Statutes. One of the main events of this Bishops Council will be the consecration of the Christ the Saviour cathedral (day of Transfiguration) and canonization of hosts of new-martyrs and confessors in Russia. It is expected that there will be totally 1,100 people canonized. . . The Orthodox Church until now never knew of such a massive canonization, since the last time a similar was happening at middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century, but then there were canonized only 39 saints".

It is visible from various newspapers reports that the amount of those canonized by the MP is quite different: there were mentioned figures of 600, 860 and even 1,100. And how many of them would be genuine new-martyrs and confessors - one may just guess. For example, the Patriarchate stubbornly refuses to mention the name of Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd (Petersburg), actual founder of the Catacomb Church, while in the list of newly canonized saints, there are such odious persons as a bishop of MP, Luke Voyno-Yassenetsky, a favorite of Stalin and even archimandrite Makary Gloukharev, of whom Fr. Georges Florovsky wrote in his book "The Paths of Russian Theology" that this 'saint' was praying together with sectarians molokans, quakers and similar and in the very end was dreaming of creating in Moscow of a "church" composed of Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants! He lived during reign of Emperor Nicholas I.

One should think that when a better situations arrive, it will take some time and effort to weed out the Russian saints rosters of very dubious persons who by accident happened to be included with the genuine saints.

Serge Sentsov, a reported of newspaper "Segodnia" (#159) in the report of July 22 writes that the document on the social doctrine was composed by a group of specialists, such as clerics as well as lay people. A decision about the necessity of such a document was made at the Council of 1994 and "for a long time its contents was very secretive and also at present, no details are publicised. According to Metropolitan Cyril (in KGB "Mikhailov") this secrecy was necessary in order to prevent "unwillingness of pressure on part of secular society". This document has 16 chapters.

Sentsov suggests that "probably there will be some corrections made, but the basics will remain unchanged".

We do not have detailed facts about a whole number of direct and actual texts which were approved by the Moscow's hierarchy which have been accepted in the course of three days only. But still, various journalists gave to those interested a valuable information about this "Jubilee Council".

Concluding the report about this Council, the newspaper "NG. Religions" on August 17<sup>th</sup> writes: "The Orthodox Church completed her work. But it is already clear by now that this Council will be viewed in the history as one of the most transitional and yet, at the same time epoch-making. An attentive observer would also add the epithet 'the most liberal'".

The newspaper notes as the most important a decision on canonization of the Royal Family and then a huge document (100 pages) on "social doctrine". It is expected that the copies will be made from this document and will be sent to parishes. It is believed that the document on social doctrine is very similar to the Papal encyclica, issued in Rome in 1891. The decree of relationship with heterodox was approved with 138 majority votes against 7. At present, no special details of this document were published, but considering that Ridiger on many occasions publicly announced that he has no intentions to sever his relationship with the heterodox, one can be sure that this decree was approved by the Council. The council also decreed, that the artificial pregnancy of a wife, if the semen belongs to a husband, should not violate the sacrament of the marriage.

Means to prevent a pregnancies, although they are not encouraged, "should not be treated as equal to abortions", if the embryo is not killed in this process. And regarding a sin of abortion, one is offered to use "economia", especially in cases, when a birth of a baby threatens the life of mother and she also already has other children. This was a way, when abortions were permitted in USA. By now, they are legal in almost all the states in America and to it, at any stage of pregnancy.

Maxim Shevchenko (on the staff of newspaper "NG. Religions") writes: "Possibly we have witnessed a brilliant campaign conducted by Patriarch Alexis II and several members of the Synod like Metropolitan Kyril of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, Metropolitan Yuvnaly of Krutitsy and Kolomna, and Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Slutsk. Only today, after we became acquainted with the council's texts, any publication of which in the media before the Council was sternly vetoed by the Patriarch (an exception was made for exclusive materials by the first person of RPTs in NG-Religii of 9<sup>th</sup> of August) - did the secrecy become comprehensive".

## SOME VICTORIES FOR HOMOSEXUALS

During the month of August the homosexuals in Europe and USA gained substantial victories.

According to The New York Times of August 4<sup>th</sup> in the center of the world Catholicism, in Rome in connection with the celebrations of the "Holy Year" declared by the Pope, the homosexuals decided their own parade, called "World Pride Roma 2000". This parade was purposely made in order to oppose the "Holy Year". To prepare the ground, beforehand the homosexuals had a seminar devoted to religion and homosexuality. Because of

Vatican's demand, a Catholic French bishop Jaques Gaillot did not participate in the seminar, but he gave to the press an interview in which he said that "The church should not have second-class citizens. Homosexuals have the same right to tolerance and dignity as any other group". He also declared that he showed obedience to the Pope, but at the same time "The Pope has done me a great service in creating an event out of me. Nobody would be asking me for interview had it not been for the Pope".

The Vatican's opposition to perverts and its efforts to postpone the parade, created a substantial internal political controversies and organized efforts on part of the "right wing" against the defenders of homosexual rights. Francis de Bernardo, representing a Catholic religious organization of "New Ways Ministry" explained that "There is a big difference in how the Vatican and American church leaders approach homosexuality. U.S. bishops want outreach". He also complained that there are no signs that there is a hope for any negotiations between the church and "gays".

One of the Roman Catholic organizations, a National Alliance and a rite wing people made their own demonstration: a seven mile walk by 1,000 people to offer "penance" for this gay pride event.

Cardinal Ersilio Tonini declared that "It pains me to see young people being told that the church is their enemy".

After not getting a municipal permission for the parade, the perverts decided to demonstrate in another way. They will march around Coliseum and form a ring around it as witnessing of their "martyrdom" for their shamelessness. The right wing people already said they would block the ways for the marchers from surrounding the structure.

Contemporary historians claim that the accounts of holy martyr's lives saying they were killed in Coliseum by the wild animals amounts to nothing but legends.

So, as we see, a Catholic clergy, including bishops and cardinals is more and more supportive of this manner of perversion.

But it seems, that homosexuals can claim even greater victory in USA.

At least during a period of two years in different parts of America there were court procedures regarding scouts and homosexuality. Scouts are considered to be a non-governmental organization and until now was professing right wing moral values. So, this organization had a right to expel from her ranks homosexuals, especially if he/she were involved in the leadership of children. Several court decisions verified the organization's rights to expel their members. Yet, this court decision will be very costly to the scout's organization.

The New York Times of August 29<sup>th</sup> reported that the successful decisions for the scouts is depriving them of public support. So, in California the scouts were already told that they no longer might use public parks, schools and municipal sites. Dozens of organizations and companies stopped their financial support to the scouts. By now it did cost them already millions of dollars.. The same happens all over America.

According to the newspaper "For the public and private officials around the country, the problem is a complex and painful one. On one hand, they do not want to cut off valuable opportunities for the young or run afoul of First Amendment principles. On the other hand, by allowing a group that bans gays to use public facilities and supporting it, they violate their anti-discrimination statutes".

Will be the scouts able to sustain this material pressure and if yes, then for how long".

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE "TURIN SHROUD"

The so-called "Turin shroud" does not cease to be a matter of interest. Also some churches in Moscow Patriarchate did not escape this interest. In two churches in Moscow in place of icon there hung replicas of this Catholic forgery.

The magazine U.S. News and World Report of July 31<sup>st</sup> reported that the Catholic "shroud" in view of the "Holy Year" will be on display in Turin from August 13<sup>th</sup> to October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Regarding this shroud there are years long discussions of specialists regarding its authenticity. A part of them tells very unconvincingly that this is a genuine shroud. Yet the other one tries to be convincing and declares it to be a fraud. It is a piece of material 14 feet long and 3.5 feet wide.

In the Orthodox church tradition there are no definite information about the fate of genuine Christ's shroud, although we know the history of the Virgin's garment which time ago was preserved in Blachema church in Constantinople or of Christ's tunic, which was given to Tsar Michael Romanoff by a Persian shah.

Once, in 1997 in our Church News #4 (60) we wrote of information by Jewish scientists who very seriously opposed the jejunity of so called "shroud" stating that the science does not know of preserved fabrics during the 2 millenniums in a humid climate. It is known to happen only in the deserts.

Also, the Israeli scientist declared that the 14 feet long fabric in no way corresponds with the manner of ancient ways of enwrinding of a deceased. Besides, it was discovered, that the impressions of the body in the fabric of front and back differ in length; the difference is 6 inches long. A Jewish archeologist Zias also pointed out, that the Jews never entwined the head of the body, while the "shroud" depicts a head. As we know from the Gospels, the "napkin, that was about his head" was laying not with the linen, but 'wrapped together in a place by itself' (Jn.20, 7). An account of Lazarus' resurrection in no way contradicts this description.

Zias also points out that the supposed prints of the hands in the false "shroud" and pierced by the nails at the palm, while at crucifixion the nails were used at the wrist, because the palms of the hand could not hold the weight of a body. Only on the ancient icons of crucifixion the hands of the Lord are stretched (without a western hanging down of a body) to depict His voluntary crucifixion.

It is interesting to find out: how long will the scientist, against the historical truth still offer to easy believing Christians that they see a true shroud of Christ and not a Catholic forgery. It is sad that some clerics of the Moscow Patriarchate could fall for this Catholic fraud!