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**ORTHODOX FAITHFUL OPEN YOUR EYES! WAKE UP!
OUR ROCOR IS IN DANGER OF SHIPWRECK!**

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AN URGENT APPEAL TO OUR READERS

Dear Reader,

Over the course of 30 years now we have striven to keep you abreast of ecclesial events not only within the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, but also of church affairs in Russia, the contemporary Orthodox world and even among the religious heterodox. We have repeatedly heard, one might say, a too high estimation of our publication, but always with the reminder that the information we publish is for many (especially in Russia and Ukraine) the sole collection source observing Church life.

In connection with the latest positions taken by the Episcopal Council of ROCOR and the publication of their Epistle, "Church News" was beseiged by numerous phone calls both from America and abroad. Regrettably this Epistle was a compromise to a sufficient degree that it troubled the consciences and minds of Orthodox people abroad.

Up to now we have automatically sent "Church News" to the entire episcopate of the ROCOR and only to those who have requested it. However, in view of the present urgent need to disseminate as widely as possible documented information, we have reached the conclusion that it is necessary to significantly increase the number of our copies. We shall now send our information to every parish in ROCOR and to all the Russian and Orthodox addresses known to us.

Never setting any value in "subscriptions," once a year we have appealed to our loyal readers to send us whatever help they could, dependent on their circumstances, receiving from \$5 to \$200, thus compensating for smaller sums.

In 1997 we noted the traitorous actions of the Synod in connection with the seizure of Hebron when the Heads of the Jerusalem Mission, Archm. Bartholomew and Abbess Juliana, were removed for their defense of Mission properties from take over by the MP, while Archb. Mark, by not only screaming at the aged Metr. Vitaly, forced him to sign the shamefully apologetic letter to Arafat but even succeeded in silencing the press sympathetic to ROCOR's integrity. We then published whatever material we had and on the first page of our publication sent out, so to say, an "SOS, ROCOR is in danger of shipwreck."

The recent resolutions of the Episcopal Council compel us anew to raise an even louder and more urgent alarm.

The increase in the dissemination of our information will very significantly raise the costs of our publication and mailing. Therefore, we appeal to all Russian and Orthodox people who treasure the ROCOR and her 80 year tradition of resisting the Moscow Patriarchate under the standard of our blessed First Hierarchs: Metr. Anthony, Anastassy, and Philaret to give us whatever help they can: to send us the addresses of those interested in the future of the Church Abroad and to send us monetary contributions, however small they may seem in their own eyes. We will be most grateful for any help, for without it we cannot achieve our goals.

Only with an informed and organized effort by Russian and Orthodox people can we preserve our principles and our churches from the approaching danger of a handover into the hands of the MP on the path of betrayal by the majority of our episcopate.

AND SO, WE CALL UPON YOU: HELP BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!
We need your help and documentary information from your location.

Make out checks and money orders to "Church News".

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"FATEFUL COUNCIL" OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

Such was the title of an article published on October 14th by O. Bartenev in the Argentinian Russian language newspaper "Nasha Strana" ("Our Country").

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia opened on October 18th, presided over by its First Hierarch, Metropolitan Vitaly with all bishops present, including four bishops from Russia, but minus Bishops Seraphim of Western Europe and Daniel of Erie, due to illness.

J. Bartenev quite justly begins his article with the words: "At present the Council of Bishops Abroad might be deciding the fate of the Russian Church Outside of Russia and therefore of the White Russian emigration. It has produced a decision to join the jurisdiction of the ROCOR with that of the Moscow Patriarchate, which, luckily, specifically, canonized the New Martyrs of Russia headed by the Royal Family". Unfortunately, the thought expressed by the author happened to be close enough to the general meeting of the parishioners of the Geneva Elevation of the Cross Cathedral held on Friday October 27th, which was attended by clergy and some 80 members of the parish, where Archbishop Ambrose **joyfully announced that finally the union with the Moscow Patriarchate had taken place.**

Considering the deceitfulness of Bishop Ambrose (the proofs of it our readers can discover themselves from the official material below) we hoped that the announcement made in Switzerland was a bluff typical of a hierarch who is going over to the Moscow Patriarchate. Therefore in conversations with several hierarchs we made an effort to make get a more precise quote of the announcement made by Bishop Ambrose. It indeed was somewhat exaggerated, but unfortunately, the Council has annihilated the borders between the ROCOR and the MP by establishing a "permanent acting committee regarding unity of the Russian Church" presided over by Archbishop Mark, and as is obvious from the minutes # 2 (October 4/17) Archbishop Laurus (as plenipotentiary Locum Tenens of Metropolitan Vitaly) declared that "We can not constantly only reproach the MP and judge her. It is necessary to note the positive occurrences and changes, which happen in Russia".

Private conversations with some hierarchs, their answers to questions put to them by parishioners of Alexander Nevsky Church in Lakewood, NJ, as well as the minutes themselves, testify quite well to the fact that in the Sobor's discussions the most painful problems were not sufficiently considered.

During the whole history of the Church Abroad, until the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, all the important decisions and resolutions of the Synods and Bishops Councils were published for the information of the faithful. There was a time when, at the conclusion of the Council, there was an official Assembly open to the public, attended by the whole body of the Council of Bishops at which several appointed bishops would inform the people about the most important issues. Gradually this tradition began to "fade away". The Synod's official publication, "Church Life" starting with the beginning of last year ceased to be published and the members of the ROCOR, instead of official information from the Church administration were left to rumors. It seems that at present the Synod of Bishops and the Council are following the procedure stated by Archbishop Mark in his interview given to the newspaper "Radonezh," which we published in our # 6(73) issue of 1998.

In it he expressed the idea that **"Now, for the time being, one has to abstain in some manner and very carefully bring to common knowledge information about what is actually going on. The purpose of these negotiations [with the MP] was misunderstood and we can not pretend that there was no scandal within our flock, that there was no storm of public opinion: there was and it still goes on."**

We feel it is necessary to share with our readers some information obtained by us.

EPISTLE OF THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA TO THE BELOVED CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH IN THE FATHER LAND AND IN DIASPORA

October 14/27th, 2000

Overshadowed by the presence of the miraculous Kursk-Root Icon of the Mother of God, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, assembled at the Synod Building in New York, addressed itself to the faithful flock, scattered throughout the whole world and in our homeland, the much suffering Russian land, wherein we perceive the beginning of a genuine spiritual awakening.

We have never taken for granted that the return of the people of Russia to our common spiritual roots would be simple and like a triumphal procession.

For this reason, with benevolent sympathy, we welcome the turn to prayer of the whole Russian people to all the holy New-martyrs of Russia, and especially the martyred Imperial Family, which has henceforth become possible thanks to the recognition of their sanctity by the Council of Bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate. And we are likewise given hope by the adoption of a new social concept by the Council which in essence cancels out the 1927 "Declaration" of Metropolitan Sergius by acknowledging the supremacy of the commandments of God over those demands of temporal powers which might lead to the violation of religious and material principles.

We venerate the martyric struggle of the many Russian soldiers who, when they were captured by infidels during recent wars, refused to renounce the Orthodox Faith and convert to another religion, for which they endured torture and death. Such confession has shown that the Russian people have preserved faith in Christ within their hearts to an

preserved faith in Christ within their hearts to an unexpected degree, despite eight decades of the erosion of the Faith by the godless regime.

However, our Council has noted the absence of any understanding by the Moscow Patriarchate of the position of the Russian Church Abroad, which has carefully been preserving the heritage of the Russian Orthodox Church. Especially lamentable are the aggressive actions of the Patriarchate in the forced confiscation of churches and monasteries from the Church Abroad, the preservation, and at times the salvation, of which has cost the Russian emigration great effort and represented a real struggle of sacrificial service to those Russian holy places which are beyond the borders of Russia.

To these grievous circumstances must be added the factor that at its Council, the Moscow Patriarchate in fact confirmed its dedication to broad participation in ecumenism, and took to protect its own younger generation from that pan-heresy.

Nor did we see the Council of Moscow Patriarchate offer an honest assessment of the anti-ecclesial actions of Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky), his Synod and their successors, even though the present Council came close to historical truth in its Act of the glorification of the New-martyrs, and, both in the aforementioned Act and its now social concept, obliquely acknowledged as praiseworthy the path of the confessors who refused to accept the path of Metropolitan Sergius.

Guided by the spirit of the Gospel, we acknowledge, with due understanding, how difficult it is to free oneself from the consequences of the Church's enslavement by the Soviet government structure with its atheistic ideology. This understanding moves us to deal sympathetically and kindly with the faithful of the formerly enslaved Church, and to welcome substantive steps toward the healing of the Church life in Russia.

On the other hand, the relationship of these measures to the fundamental points which we have enunciated for many years in our care for the purity of the Church persuade us to remain faithful to the course of the Church Abroad. Even now we must fulfill our historic mission of standing for the Truth, until all who have been redeemed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are convinced of it.

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia addressed to its flock a new, urgent call to be loyal to the end. Your archpastors must be able to have confidence in your love and your trust in the Russian Orthodoxy of the Holy Fathers, which is being preserved by our Church, a loyalty which all the members of the Council of Bishops, without exception, confess again and again in unanimity.

The eighty-year history of our exiled Church has borne clear witness before the world that we have not turned ourselves into an exclusive, self-enamored society, but maintain a Church possessed of the fullness of soul-saving grace. Those who depart from us have not been able to undermine the authority of our Church, since its glory has been derived and does not drive from earthly power or any sizable membership, but from immutable adherence to the Truth, to the righteousness of God.

We hold it our duty to remind our flock of the paramount importance of each member of the Church preserving the personal piety which is the principal token of our salvation within the Church.

Frequently among us the critical stand taken against social vices, against the retreat of today's world from the divine and moral laws, begets an inattentive attitude toward one's personal spiritual peace, and as a result the level of personal piety falls. So it happens that, while criticizing apostasy, we ourselves become participants in the universal abandonment of piety.

Conversely, feats of personal piety: prayer, fasting, abstinence, repentance, brotherly love, patience, humility and meekness, have been, and remain, the principal weapon against the destruction of the whole world and the salvific means not only of one's personal salvation, but of that of the universal establishment on the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Yet we will proclaim to the whole world our stand for the Truth in vain if the members of our Church prefer not the personal life of virtue but of suspicion towards others, arguments, the formation of groups for the condemnation of others, and various actions which shatter the life of parish and diocese. This ruination, which draws into everlasting destruction each who participates in it, inevitably besmirches the face of our whole Church and weakens its witness.

With gratitude toward God that we belong to the true Church which is founded on the Rock of Faith, of Lord Jesus Christ, we urge you to remain its faithful members and to strengthen its saving work by feats of personal piety, mutual love and patient bearing of "one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). Be mindful of the words of Christ: "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (Jn. 13:35). Amen."

The First Hierarchy of the ROCOR Metropolitan Vitally signed this Epistle along with the entire membership of the episcopate, excluding Bishop Barnabas of Cannes, who refused to sign this document.

The first draft of this Epistle was made by Bishop Evtikhy, who was speaker of the Council and was assisted by Archbishop Mark. The Council expressed its gratitude to him for work done.

If one reads this Epistle just quickly, it makes a rather innocent impression. Yet, by the third paragraph one is surprised by the satisfaction of the ROCOR Council of Bishops with the Moscow Patriarchate acceptance of a "social conception" (the original term is "social doctrine") which produced in Russia itself a lot of criticism and controversy. In particular, it was noted that this document resembled greatly the papal encyclical of 1891 and that the Moscow Patriarchate's Council was congenially characterized by the press as "epochal" and extremely "liberal".

The reference in the Epistle of the Council of Bishops to the decisions of the council of Moscow Patriarchate is in direct violation of ROCOR tradition since the treacherous "Declaration" of 1927 by Sergius Stragorodsky. From the moment that Stalin established the Moscow Patriarchate until the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, the Councils of the Church Abroad always stressed that the Moscow Patriarchate is a usurper of the Church Administration and therefore, her decisions and rulings have no effect upon the Church Abroad.

Now, we observe quite the opposite: The Council of Bishops of the ROCOR in regard to her relations to this self-appointed assemblage is basing its decisions upon the resolutions of the very same assemblage!

The Council quite justly calls Ecumenism a "pan-heresy", but this in no way prevents some ROCOR bishops from concelebrating with these "pan-heretics" and, despite these actions, from receiving awards from the Council. So Archbishop Mark, who brags about his concelebrating with the Serbian Ecumenists ("Herald of the German Diocese" of 4/00) received a diamond cross on his klobuk; Bishop Ambrose, immediately after being appointed to the Western Europe see and being elevated to the rank of archbishop, concelebrated with a MP priest; Bishop Kyrill also concelebrated with the Serbian Ecumenist, Bishop John. For a number of years, the recently reposed Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco also concelebrated with Serbs. Among the contemporary "Orthodox" churches, the Serbian Patriarchate seems to be one of the leaders in the Ecumenical Movement, concelebrating with Roman Catholics even on the episcopal level. What makes the Serbian Ecumenist church any better than the MP or any of the other Ecumenist "Orthodox churches"?

Recently in this September's issue of the official Serbian Church publication "Pravoslavje" ("Orthodoxy") it was reported that following an invitation from the Serbian Church, a Catholic delegation arrived in Belgrade and issued a common communiqué in which it was stated that this three day visit resulted in "joint prayer and brotherly dialogue, with a feeling of prayerful respect and admiration before sacred objects of the Orthodox Church, we have grown even closer to each other" ("Ch. N." # 7(89)).

The 45th Apostolic Canon quite clearly states: "Let a bishop, presbyter, or deacon who has only prayed with heretics be excommunicated: but if he has permitted them to perform any clerical office, let him be deposed". And the 10th Apostolic Canon states: "If any one shall pray, even in private house, with an excommunicate person, let him also be excommunicate".

The anathema pronounced concerning the Ecumenist heresy by the Council of ROCOR bishops in 1983 without any doubt states that all Ecumenists "are excommunicated".

Therefore, does not the definite statement made by the Council of Bishops that they are "faithful to the Patristic Russian Orthodoxy which all the members of the Council of Bishops, without exception, confess again and again in unanimity" mislead the faithful?

Even more strange sounds the declaration by the fathers of the Council, that "the critical stand taken against social vices, against the retreat of today's world from the divine and moral laws, begets an inattentive attitude toward one's spiritual peace, and as a result the level of personal piety falls. So it happens that, while criticizing apostasy, we ourselves become participants in the universal abandonment of piety" !

On October 4/17th the Council deliberated on the situation of the Church in Russia and in connection with that, the composition of its future Epistle.

His Grace Bishop Agathangel expressed his concern that in the Epistle there should be no reproaches of the Moscow Patriarchate for not canonizing the New Martyr Metr. Joseph of Petrograd. This was the actual founder of the Catacomb Church. And even this is more astonishing coming from Bp. Agathangel, a bishop of the True Orthodox Church, which claims her succession from the Catacomb Church!

Archbishop Lazarus (minutes # 7 of 11/24th) mentioned that "omission in the Epistle of mention that the MP had not canonized Metropolitan Joseph of Petrograd – will provoke reprimands among our flock in Russia".

This was objected to by Archbishop Mark, who said that "there exists in our Church life an unhealthy fear of the MP: We have become prisoners of the opinions of parishes in Russia. In the end, the parishes abroad one after another will leave for the MP" (!?)

In harmony with the Greek Bishop Cyprian, Archbishop Mark declared that "the MP is a Russian church body – a sick part of the Russian Church".

After making a short review of history of the Church in Russia after the Revolution and the reaction to it by the Church Abroad, the Council resolved:

After thorough deliberations concerning the acceptance of the following text of the resolution, the Council of Bishops, after hearing on October 4/17th 2000, the report of His Grace Bishop Evtikhy about the Council of Moscow Patriarchate Bishops, convened on August 2000, ruled:

The Archpastors of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia tried always to objectively follow church life in Russia, particularly during the last decade. When some part of the official Church of Russia was compromised in matters of faith and piety, and also renounced the Martyrs for Faith of our century, then the Archpastors of the ROCOR came forward to defend the purity of Orthodoxy and the glory of the Russian Church of the 20th century – the Holy Martyrs of Russia. Any apostasy was accepted with sadness and the prayer that sooner or later in Russia there would triumph the Truth. And when the clergy and faithful were subject to persecutions, then the hierarchs of the free part of the Russian Church, co-suffering with them, lifted their voices in their defense.

During every Liturgy for more than 80 years, a prayer was always said in our churches that in our suffering Russia not one of those redeemed by the honorable Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ would perish, but "that all of them be saved and come to their senses." Therefore the bishops who gathered for the Bishops Council of the ROCOR with special hope and gratitude to God the Lord noted the decision of the MP to number with the hosts of saints the New Martyrs of Russia and among them, the Tsar Martyr and his Imperial Family. We do hope that this glorification is the start of repentance and that it will have a benevolent influence not only upon church life in Russia, but also throughout Russia [sic]. We hope that now the prayers to the Tsar Martyr, which now become all-Russia's prayer, will bring to the much suffering Russian people the resurrection of the true Faith, peace and well being. We also believe that one of the reasons for separation between our Church and the Moscow Patriarchate, which was laid out in the Epistle of the Council of Bishops of the ROCOR in the year 1987, thanks to the Lord's mercy has been partially removed (underlined by "Ch. N.").

At the Bishops' Council of the Moscow Patriarchate partially there was resolved also another matter, that of the so-called "Sergianism": 'If the government forces Orthodox faithful to apostatize from Christ and His Church, and also to sinful and soul damaging acts, the Church has to refuse the obedience to the government...' (From the Foundations of the Social Concepts of the ROC, MP). For the first time, on the conciliar level the Moscow Patriarchate makes an effort to defend its independence and to separate itself from the government, in this manner stepping away from the principles laid out in the sorry Declaration by Metropolitan Sergius Stragorodsky in 1927 and indirectly acknowledging the path of the confessors who did not approve of the course of Metropolitan Sergius as worthy of praise.

The decision of the Episcopal Council of the Moscow Patriarchate regarding relations with the heterodox, and therefore to Ecumenism, are not defined clearly enough and are often ambiguous. Due to its wide spectrum, some attitudes are acceptable to zealots of Orthodoxy while other attitudes fill the Ecumenists with joy. Especially troublesome is the decision that has not one word of any prohibition of common prayers with the heterodox, and also the total justification of former and present Ecumenical activity. In this way, the matter of participation of the MP in the Ecumenical Movement becomes the primal cause of the separation of the ROCOR from the MP.

Taking into consideration all mentioned above, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad considers that the Council of the Moscow Patriarchate has made considerable progress toward the improvement of conditions of the church life in Russia. This first positive step of the Moscow Patriarchate on the conciliar level cannot but give us hope. The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad considers it to be proper to create at present time a permanent working committee on the matter of unity of the Russian Church" (underlined by "Ch. N.").

Minutes # 8, dated October 12/25, thus reports that: "Resolved: to create, responsible to the Synod, a committee on matters of unity of the Russian Church with the following members: Archbishop Mark, Bishop Gabriel, Bishop Michael, Archpriest Nicholas Artemov, Archpriest Peter Perekrestov and Deacon Paul Ivanov".

A very "promising" organization!

Minutes # 9, dated October 13/26, there is a decision to send the following letter to the Serbian Patriarch Paul:

To His Beatitude, All Holy Patriarch Paul, Archbishop of Serbia and Metropolitan of Belgrade – Karlovci.
Your Holiness!

The Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, convened in New York in October 2000, greets your Holiness and expresses to you and all the much suffering Serbian people deep gratitude for all the good that the Serbian Church did for the Russian people who fled into foreign lands during the vicious years of Communist terror in Russia.

The Russian and Serbian peoples always have been brothers by blood and by Faith and from the time when Serbia gave us refuge, our spiritual bonds became even stronger. This is why we always keep so close to our hearts and feelings the various difficulties and sorrows which the Serbian people experience from their religious and political enemies, especially now in connection with the tragic events in Kosovo.

Being your brothers by blood and Faith, we have always treasured the Eucharistic Communion between our Sister-Churches and wished to preserve the comfort of this Communion to the end of time.

As you know, during our exile from our Homeland, our Church could not have Communion with the Church administration in Russia because it was under the watchful control of the godless government. Nevertheless, we always believed this ordeal which befell our nation to be a temporary one and therefore we prayed God for the salvation of our Homeland and for the rebirth of the Russian Church.

And then the miracle happened, the prayers of the hosts of New Martyrs of Russia were heard: the danger which was threatening the whole world from the godless government collapsed before our eyes! Now, with joy and hope we observe that the process of spiritual rebirth predicted by our saints is taking place and at the same time, parallel to it there are gradually healthier conditions in the church administration in Russia. This is a difficult process and it proceeds not without opposition. Nevertheless, the bright evidence of it is the recent glorification of the New Martyrs of Russia and headed by the murdered Imperial Family and the condemnation of the policy of cooperation with godless powers during the past Council of Bishops in Moscow.

There remain also other serious wounds in the leadership of the Russian Church which prevent our spiritual rapprochement. Nevertheless, we pray God to heal them as well by His all-powerful grace of the Holy Spirit. Then should come the desirable rapprochement and, may God grant, the spiritual union between two of the dissolved parts of the Russian Church, the one in the Homeland and the one which happened to be abroad. (underlined by "Ch. N.")

We beg Your Holiness to assist it.

We use this opportunity to thank Your Holiness and in your person the entire Serbian Church for the recent hospitable reception of Archbishop Mark of Germany.

We beg Your Holiness not to push us away from liturgical communion with you, because all of us want to eternally glorify our Savior, Christ the Lord with one heart and one mouth".

As we have mentioned above, the Serbian Church (after the Ecumenical Patriarchate) is one of the leaders in Ecumenism!

The very same meeting resolved to appoint Archimandrite Peter (Lukianov) as a Chief of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem, without mentioning what has happened to the previous Chief of the Mission, Archimandrite Alexis Biron -- is he deposed, transferred to another duty or suspended from serving in this capacity?

The next decision states: "2) To appoint a clergyman, Hieromonk Valery (Kovalchuk) from Kiev to serve the communities in Jerusalem, subject to clearing up the circumstances of conditions of his parish in Kiev".

It is common practice to first clear up the conditions and only after that to make appointments!

On the same day Archbishop Laurus made a critical statement about "the weak points of the Synod's office work". Each and every one (even without a report of the Synod's Secretary) of them are perfectly obvious.

Archbishop Laurus points out that "1) Synod letterheads without the permission of the Synod or Council of Bishops were changed; 2) not all the correspondence regarding church matters is entered into incoming and outgoing records; 3) the archives are in bad shape; 4) important books are missing from the library; 5) it is impossible to reach the First Hierarch by phone, except for the Secretary; 6) it is hard to reach the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Synod; 7) priests have already forgotten how to turn to the Synod; 8) there are heard complaints that there is often no one in the Synod to address; 9) the Canadian diocese of its own initiative is ruled by only Vicar Bishop Michael; 10) the situation in Western Europe is unstable.

"We are heading for destruction," said Archbishops Laurus, "if we do not remedy this situation. There have appeared a multitude of 'unwise zealots' who criticize our bishops and their actions".

This report of Archbishop Laurus is especially startling, because he himself is the one who for 14 years has been Secretary of the Synod and the person solely responsible for its operation!

No prescription to remedy this situation was offered by the Bishops. However, following a suggestion by Archbishop Mark, the Council appointed "Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov to be an office administrator [it seems, without asking his agreement] and Abbot Joakim (Parr) as head of the Foreign Relations Department. So that in the absence of Bishop Gabriel there would be some one available to answer inquiries".

Can it be that not one of the Council's members is aware that Protopresbyter Valery Lukianov is rector of a very large parish and lives no less than 150 miles away from New York? Also that an Office Administrator during Metropolitan Philaret's time lived in the Synod building and was working from 10 to 11 hours a day, including holidays and, at that, was still behind in his work!

Regarding the appointment of Abbot Joachim, he has tried out several "jurisdictions", does not speak a word of Russian and does not conceal his willingness to serve with the Moscow Patriarchate!

A short while before the opening of the ROCOR Council, we mailed out and published an excellent Epistle to the ROCOR Bishops signed by Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir. As is stated in the minutes # 6 of October 10/23, "Bishops Evtikhy asks the Council not to consider the Epistle of the so-called 'Archbishop' Valentine, since he has been defrocked by us. The Hierarchs agree that the Epistle by the so-called 'Archbishop' Valentine should not be considered".

What a shame -- he characterized the Moscow Patriarchate and her connections with Ecumenists far better than Bishop Evtikhy! By the way, the report from the city of Vladimir that, in order to bolster his reputation, Archbishop Valentin commemorates Metropolitan Vitaly during services is a overt lie.

Despite the wide spread speculations that Metropolitan Vitaly will be retired, this did not happen, although there is reliable information that an offer was made that he retire which he flatly refused. On the recommendation of Archbishops Mark and Hilarion, the Council elected "a Locum Tenens to the president with full authority" in the person of Archbishop Laurus.

Bishop Gabriel, while retaining his title of Bishop of Manhattan, is now the ruling bishop of Eastern American diocese, Bishop Kyrill is appointed ruling bishop of the Western American diocese and Archbishop Mark was awarded a diamond cross for his klobuk.

The editors of "Church News" received a fervent "Appeal of the Rector to the Parishioners of the Dormition Church in Richmond Hill (N.Y.) regarding the 'Epistle of the ROCOR Bishops' Council' ", signed by Hieromonk Paisius. The translation from Russian was made by St. Stefan of Perm Guild, The Russian Cultural Heritage Society of George Spruksts.

"On October 13/26th, 2000, the aforementioned Epistle – which, in its format and spiritual significance, blots out the entire ROCOR stance of purity in confessing Divine Truth on earth, was approved and signed at the Bishop's Council that took place in New York. The significance of this, our Church's stance, was the conviction that the path of confessing [the Faith, –that] of the New Martyrs – was, and continues to be, the only salvific one. There is no other way the Church in Russia to be reborn in the Spirit of Christ's Truth – or, for [our] uniting with it – except that such pseudo-church organizations as the Moscow Patriarchate be born again, from within, as a church.

From out of the grain of Divine Truth being preserved inviolate by us, there will rise up, without doubt – if only for the very briefest of periods – a true renaissance of the spirit of the Russian people, for whom it was always much more important to follow the way of righteousness – as evidenced by the words and Right-believing Prince Alexander Nevsky: "God is not in might, but in righteousness,"—and not that of wicked expediencies and compromises with one's own conscience.

If one briefly summarized the content of the entire Epistle, then, in its essence, it comes down to two points:

The first is that the graceless assemblage – which substituted manifest Chekists [Communist secret police agents - G. S.] in cassocks, for those Confessors and New Martyrs who had been slain and tortured to death for Christ's Faith – is declared to be a legislative authority; and at the same time, the source of "spiritual awakening" in Russia, which provides the Russian people the 'opportunity' to supplicate the New Martyrs – the Royal Martyrs, in particular – in prayer.

The second concerns the so-called new 'social concept', which was embraced at the MP Council –, according to the assertion of those of our Church Hierarchs who signed the Epistle (as they affirm therefore—'essentially blots out the 1927 declaration of Sergei Stragorodski'. It is by means of this statement, which has no basis in reality, that they seek to convince all of us that Sergianism (as a corrupt way of cooperating with godless regime) is no more; and that there are no longer any obstacles to the Church Abroad with the MP.

The supposed proof of this is to be found in the special commission that was created at the Council (having been approved at the October 12/25th, 2000, session of the same), which consists of the following people:

Archbishop Mark, Bishop Gabriel, Protopriest Nicholas Artemov, Protopriest Peter Perekrestov and Deacon Paul Ivanov.

Its stated purpose is: "to deal with the questions of the Russian Church's unity". The creation (of this commission) was preceded by a conciliar deliberation regarding the matter; and its conclusion can be stated as three fundamental elements:

- 1 It is asserted that the glorification of the Royal Martyrs on the part of MP "is an initial act of repentance; hence, one of the reasons for the division [between the ROCOR and the MP] has been eliminated, for the most part."
- 2 It is likewise stated that, at the Council of the Moscow Patriarchate, the other issue which has divided us – that of "Sergianism", so called – was also "partially" surmounted; to wit, it is claimed that, within the ranks of the MP: "For the first time ever, the MP has attempted to defend the independence of the Church" (the world church has been capitalized here, as it was in the original [text of the Epistle].
- 3 For today, according to the sense of what those who signed the Epistle mean, the heresy of Ecumenism, alone, remains the chief obstacle to ROCOR's union with the MP. But, knowing the state of fear within the MP, this is a hint to the part of the "conservative clergy" of this Patriarchate to surmount this problem by purely outward means, in order to make further union with it [the MP] possible.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters! I am responsible for each of you before God, and that gives me the boldness to disagree with this Epistle of our Hierarchs. They can accuse me of "prefer[ring] suspicion of others, arguments, quarrels, the creation of associations for condemning others, and various actions that destabilize parish life for condemning others, and various actions that destabilize parish life... to a life of personal virtue". But the sole intent of all that I have said is concern for your spiritual salvation.

I call upon you to remain faithful to the ideals of ROCOR, the faithful sons and daughters of which, for almost 80 years now, have not participated in the iniquity of this world and are a spiritual beacon for all those who have been – and continue to be – tormented for the Faith; not in Russia only, but throughout all the world.

The Moscow Patriarchate, having been brought into being by a decree of that vicious butcher, Stalin, at the beginning of the [Second World] War, is, in its essence, a wicked gathering, called upon to supersede the Church of Christ in people's eyes. Its entire history is a path of vile falsehood and iniquity. The transformation of the regime from being a totalitarian one to being a Masonic-democratic one, has not changed its essence and actions in any way, whatsoever. And today, they propose that all of us enter upon this pernicious and evil path. But will this path save us? Let each of us ask ourselves [this]. As for me, my dear parishioners, my inner peace and accord with my conscience is greater and more important to me than the superficial, illusory benefits of this world, and I am not prepared to trade away Christ for "thirty pieces of silver".

I invoke God's blessing upon you,
Hieromonk Paisii, Parish Rector

October 23/November 5th, 2000
 Richmond Hill, New York

On Saturday, October 30th/November 11th, it became known that on order of Archbishop Laurus this courageous priest was suspended by Bishop Gabriel. There was no vigil service in the Dormition Church in Richmond Hill on Saturday and another priest was sent to perform the service on Sunday!

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WESTERN EUROPE DIOCESE

A few months ago, rumors started to circulate about serious troubles which arose in the life of the Elevation of the Cross Cathedral in Geneva, Switzerland. For quite some time, Archbishop Seraphim, who resides in the Lesna Convent, stopped participating in the administration of the diocese entrusted to him and even did not respond to telephone calls or mail. Therefore, the Western Europe diocese was quietly split among Bishops Barnabas, Ambrose and Archbishop Mark. Bishop Ambrose received Switzerland, Belgium and nearly all of France.

But due to his disturbing "liberalism", Bishop Ambrose managed to provoke a whole number of the most well known clergy of the diocese and especially those parishioners well educated in church matters concerning the cathedral. An open scandal erupted on the feast of the Protection of the Holy Virgin on October 1/14th when the rector of the cathedral Archpriest Paul Tsvetkov and Priest Adrian Eshvarria distributed a letter in French, which was translated into Russian and we, in turn, use a revised Internet translation.

"Geneva, 1/14 October 2000.

Protection of the Holy Virgin

Dear parishioners!

At the dawn of the 21st century, our parish finds itself at an important crossroads in its existence.

A number of individuals responsible for the life of our parish have expressed a desire, on one hand not to be left out of the Church renaissance in Russia, with which our parish has historical ties, and on the other hand – from now on to be in complete communion with the whole fullness of Orthodoxy.

In reply to the wishes expressed by part of the clergy and also by the parish council concerning the return to the bosom of the Russian Church, we received from His Holiness, Alexis II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, a proposal to accept us into the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, and granting us the status of a stavropigial parish, i.e. complete administrative and financial independence. At the same time, neither the church building nor the property of our parish will be subject to expropriation as a result of any actions from without. Members of the clergy may remain in their positions if they wish to do so.

The Parish Council almost unanimously decided to respond positively to this proposal. Truly, the time has come when mistrust, mutual ignorance, and holding grudges have to give way to trust, mutual understanding and love for one's neighbor. The moment has come when we have to become true laborers of peace in Christ.

We realize that some of you will be shocked and scandalized by this possibility. Unfortunately, the recent proclamations of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad deprive us of a choice if we wish to remain within the fullness of Orthodoxy.

Nonetheless, we wish to consult with you on this issue. With this letter you will find enclosed the "Reminder of the main events of the Russian Orthodox Church since the establishment of the Patriarchy in 1917". After you acquaint yourself with this information, you may express your opinion in writing, either in French or in Russian, and send your reply to the parish office (to Fr. Paul or Fr. Adrian, 18, rue de Beaumont, 1206 Geneve) Your opinions will be read and will be known only to your priests who will draw their conclusions from them.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you through the intercession of His All-Pure Mother, by the power of the Life-Giving Cross, and by the prayers of all the Saints of the Russian Land, and may He grant us all the wisdom necessary to make the right decision.

Priest Adrian Echevarria

Archpriest Paul Tsvetkoff"

Along with this declaration signed by two clergymen, a "Reminder" was enclosed consisting of two and a half pages giving the dates of the major events in the history of the Geneva cathedral. This document is of sufficient interest by itself. From their letter and the enclosure it is obvious that these clergymen are interested mainly in material concerns and they are in no way considering the dogmatic and canonical consequences of such a step.

The "Reminder" states that in 1995 "Due to insufficient preparation, the meeting between Bishop Ambrose (ROCOR) and Metropolitan Kyrill (MP) resulted in failure".

During the very same year Alexis Ridiger visited Geneva. At that time Bishop Ambrose refused to allow him to serve in the cathedral because the former applied not directly to him, but through the municipal administration. Ridiger then served in a Protestant church, but this did not prevent him from "having a conversation with members of our parish in a spirit of openness, charity and understanding."

Starting with 1995 to 2000 "the development of contacts between clergy of both parishes and several parishioners" occurred. Here are meant parishes of ROCOR and MP.

After that, the events unfolded at a very different speed. In March, 2000, there was published an "Appeal of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad to the Russian Orthodox People".

The Geneva parish Council characterized this appeal of the Synod of Bishops as "A justification for schism and laying down the preliminary conditions to justify submission of the ROCOR to the Mother Church."

On April 2nd, 2000, "The parishioners by accident [?!] found out about the existence of this document", which among others was signed also by Bishop Ambrose himself. In view of that, a special committee was created to study the relationship with the MP.

On May 10th this group presented to Bishop Ambrose their research and recommendations. On a parish meeting held on May 31st "Bishop Ambrose slightly outlines partial answers" to the five presented points and "promises to organize a meeting for interested parishioners in order to verbally answer the parishioners' concerns" regarding relations with the MP. Yet, summer passed, autumn came and Bishop Ambrose never convened the promised meeting and also issued no directives.

In June the Parish Council offered to have a meeting with Kyrill of Smolensk in order to clarify in detail "our economical and organizational independence", since "the first Patriarchal offer was received somewhat skeptically by Bishop Ambrose".

On August 21st there was published the "Pre-Councilar Epistle" of the First Hierarchy of ROCOR, Metropolitan Vitaly. During one of the meetings with the parish council members, Bishop Ambrose refused to support this document officially. But on October 8th, in the presence of a majority of the parish Council members, the same Bishop Ambrose declared, that "the only major obstacle to union with the Church in Russia is a psychological obstacle." Thus Bishop Ambrose stepped over this "psychological obstacle" only a few weeks ago when, during a parish dinner for a cathedral feast, he sat at the same table with a number of MP clergy!

The offer of Priests Tsvetkoff and Echevarria to agree to join the MP on October 1/14 brought forth an immediate reaction from the entire Western Europe diocese. On October 17th an appeal was published over the Internet to the Council of Bishops which began with the words: "It is with profound dismay and disgust that we only just now found out about the planned transfer of our Geneva Elevation of the Cross Cathedral into the hands of the so-called 'Moscow Patriarchate' in November of this year". Then it is stated that "everything was done behind our backs, no one was informed about anything as if this were a 'private Geneva matter' which has no reflection and significance either to the Western Europe Diocese or the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad". The letter humbly asks "The Holy Council of Bishops to take immediate measures to stop this treason and eventual illegal actions".

This letter was signed by Bishop Barnabas, 7 archpriests, 7 priests, two protodeacons, the Abbess of Lesna Convent, 2 sub-deacons and 4 readers of the Western Europe diocese, i. e. almost the entire clergy of this diocese. From the minutes of the Council of Bishops it is obvious that the Western Europe clergy do not want to have Ambrose as diocesan ruling bishop.

For five years, knowing well of the intentions of the few clergy and minor groups of parishioners (8 members of Parish Council elected for life, among whom there a several non-Russians and even Masons) to join the MP, participating in all the parish meetings of this Council, Bishop Ambrose did not in any way react to this action of the leaders to the Geneva parish. One has to believe that all this was not unknown to the Synod of Bishops as well and even the Council of Bishops, who received several warnings of this action and who, nevertheless, elevated him to the rank of archbishop and appointed a ruling Bishop for Western Europe diocese. After those events Bishop Ambrose published his public "Appeal to pious parishioners of the Elevation of the Cross Cathedral, entitling it "The Participation in a Lie". Unfortunately, his letter indeed merits this accurate title.

His Grace Ambrose starts his letter to the parishioners with no salutation, but as a subtitle he uses three verses from the book of Parables (9: 7-10) in church Slavonic and he incorrectly says instead of "give instruction to a wise man" – "give instruction to a righteous man". In general, he uses the Biblical texts very liberally and not always properly.

The very first sentence of his letter already sounds a deceptive note because it refers to the proposal "to join another jurisdiction" instead of the well known desire of the Parish Council to unite with the MP.

Then, after pointing out that he disagrees with the document which "presents the generally accepted events with a bias, if not falsely," he declares that "when I became acquainted with the letter of October 5th, 2000, # 4105, addressed to the Rector and the Parish Council of our church and with preceding circumstances, I received the most terrible blow in my lifetime, I became mute, trying to control the overflow of my feelings". Yet, the roster of the parishes Abroad clearly states that the rector of the cathedral is the very same Archpriest Paul Tsvetkov, who signed this treacherous appeal to parishioners. So far we do not know the contents of the letter of October 5th #4105 and to whom it was actually addressed. From the letter of Bishop Ambrose it is not clear if he has suspended Rev. Tsvetkoff or removed another clergyman who cosigned a letter with Tsvetkoff from his position. After 5 years of contacts with the MP of this or that degree, all of a sudden Bishop Ambrose cunningly writes: "One of the prominent members of this hierarchy, without embarrassment, told me that the Moscow Patriarchate is the only institution which survived from the days of the Soviet Union". At that time it was already common knowledge that on several occasions he had met with Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk. Then, why didn't he mention him by name?

At the same time, with the blessing of the "Ruling Bishop" (at the Council, Bishop Ambrose was still only a vicar of Archbishop Seraphim) the parishioners started to collect signatures to the following letter addressed to the Moscow Patriarch:

"Geneva, October 16th, 2000

With the following letter we inform you that a group of persons consisting of 8 people presented to you incorrect information regarding the possible submission of the Geneva parish to the Moscow Patriarchate.

As you must definitely know, such a decision exclusively belongs to the competence of the Council of Bishops of the Church Outside of Russia (further, ROCOR). Any other variation for the solution of this matter would be a gross violation of the canons of the Orthodox Church, of which you are informed by this letter. We also remind you that the contacts regarding jurisdictional matters of the Geneva parish of the ROCOR should be established by the ruling Bishop and with the approval of the Synod of ROCOR and by all means not by an archpriest and members of the Parish Council.

The group which founded a so-called "Association of the Elevation of the Cross Parish of the Russian Church" has no canonical and no legal right to determine the fate of the parish. Swiss law as well as Russian upholds freedom of association and the citizens of Switzerland are entitled to create any sorts of associations which are not prohibited by the law, naming them at will. But this in no way means that similar associations have the right to take upon themselves any obligations concerning matters which are beyond their competence. In this manner, any negotiations between the Association and the Department for Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, according to the civil law are obligatory only on its members (on October 16, 2000, consisting of 8 persons).

If you are really interested in knowing the opinion of Elevation of the Cross Parish in Geneva about its possibly joining the Moscow Patriarchate jurisdiction, then, as you may judge from this letter, this initiative found no wide support either among the parishioners or the clergy. Surely, the reasons for this are well known to you and to your assistants and are connected with the past as well as present actions of the Moscow Patriarchate.

At the same time, we would like to stress that the opinion of the parishioners and clergy of Geneva ROCOR parish in no way can be final, but has only an advisory character thus bringing it to the attention of the ROCOR's Council of Bishops which alone has the final say.

Once again we draw your attention to the fact that the actions of a group of persons who pretend to represent the interests and opinions of the Geneva parish are of a clearly anti-canonical origin and from the Swiss legal point of the view have no authority".

This declaration (in Russian and French) addressed to Alexis Ridiger happens to be a peculiarly lukewarm document. While renouncing the legality of the Geneva's Parish Council so-called "Association" to lead the negotiations with MP with the purpose of joining it, this association puts the whole matter in a quite wrong perspective. In this very polite letter to Ridiger the application of principles is totally absent. The whole problem is viewed exclusively from the legal side and all religious and canonical responsibility is placed on the shoulders of the Council of Bishops.

On Friday October 14/27th there was a general meeting of the Geneva parish, presided over by Archbishop Ambrose who was just elevated to the rank of ruling Archbishop of Western Europe.

According to news received from Switzerland, the Friday meeting at which at least 80 persons participated, was very stormy and the behavior of Archbishop Ambrose created much confusion, since his answers seemed to many to be very cunning.

From the very beginning of the meeting he declared that he is very happy with the Council's agreement to join the Moscow Patriarchate had to stop any kind of criticism of it.

Asked if he would now concelebrate with the MP, he answered positively, and when asked about his opinion of the "Preconciliar Epistle" of Metropolitan Vitaly, he responded with sharply expressed indignation.

GLORIFICATION OF METROPOLITAN PHILARET (VOZNESENSKY) BY A GREEK ORTHODOX HIERARCHY

A parish leaflet published by the Holy Resurrection Church in the city of Worcester, MA, formerly in the ROCOR and forced after the repose of Metropolitan Philaret to go under omophorion of a Greek Orthodox Church centered in Boston, reported that according to a decision made by the Council of Bishops of this Church, during May of 2001 there will be performed a rite of his glorification.

The resolution states: "In view of the courageous and outstanding confession of the Orthodox Faith made time and again in both sermons and writings by Metropolitan Philaret of New York of blessed memory, and in view of God's divine confirmation of the sanctity of his life and confession of faith through the manifestation of his incorrupt relics, the Sacred Synod resolves that this twentieth century beacon of Orthodoxy be recognized as being among the saints. Moreover, the Holy Synod commissions the Very Reverend Protospesbyter Victor Melehov of the Church of the Holy Resurrection, Worcester, Massachusetts, to prepare for the glorification of the blessed Metropolitan Philaret in May 2001".

The veneration of Metropolitan Philaret started to spread especially when, after the transfer of his coffin from the cemetery church in Jordanville to a permanent burial vault, it was discovered that his relics are incorrupt. A short while ago in St. Petersburg, Russia, a group known as the "Center of Theological Enlightenment," which offers theological courses, wrote an excellent complete service in Church Slavonic to Metropolitan Philaret.

Is not this amazing? An Orthodox Old Calendar Greek hierarchy glorifies Metropolitan Philaret, a group of people belonging to Archbishop Valentine of Suzdal and Vladimir composes a complete service to him in Church Slavonic, and the ROCOR, which he led for more than 20 years, after discovering his incorrupt relics quickly puts them in an deep

cement vault! Is not it in this way easier to "forget" his archpastoral conviction that the Moscow Patriarchate, with which now the ROCOR hierarchy is flirting so openly, is a graceless institution?!

THE LOSS OF THE ROCOR CHURCH IN VIENNA (AUSTRIA)

During the autumn of the current year it became known that the ROCOR lost her right to use of St. Brigitta Church, which was loaned by the Roman Catholics. It had been received shortly after the end of the Second World War.

The church warden was somebody with the name Lapin, who many years ago was dismissed by the late Bishop Stephan for his fraud in restoring the church. Now the same Lapin has come to life again in the role of a very active parishioner.

About two years ago Lapin began to complain that no one was interested in this parish and that is why no priest was appointed to Vienna. When in May, 1999, a priest from Munich was appointed, who published a schedule of services through the end of September, Lapin hurriedly informed Munich that at present no priest was needed because the church was under repair.

The parishioners hoped that Archbishop Mark, who is their ruling bishop, might restore their liturgical life. But soon one disappointment followed another. Priest Arseny Zoubkov, appointed by Archbishop Mark settled "for a couple of days" in the apartment of an elderly and very active parishioner, however, he stayed with her for two months. Unwelcome visitors started to appear at her apartment. The new appointed rector had to spend time until late in the evening in restaurants in the company of women who behaved scandalously and even frequented places where male strippers entertain.

Meanwhile, Lapin started to insist that this parishioner hand over to him the keys to the church and to vacate it because a Catholic priest demanded it.

After a while, Priest Arseny, appointed by Archbishop Mark, announced that he planned to conduct services in an art gallery, but none of the more staunch parishioners wanted to attend. Then this priest said he would open his own parish and "he has no use for the old ladies". As a result the parishioners decided to change the locks to prevent Arseny access to the church. Meanwhile it became known that he had destroyed three parishes! The patience of Archbishop Mark under whose jurisdiction Priest Arseny was – is amazing. Here again Lapin surfaced being very sympathetic to the parishioners and even helped to change the locks, but retaining the keys.

All efforts of Archbishop Mark to regain use of the church have failed.

SOME CATHOLICS ARE UNHAPPY WITH THE APOSTLES

The well known magazine "U. S. News & World Report" of September 11th published an article entitled "Editing Peter and Paul".

As it happens, even the Irish Catholic bishops have no doubts that the famous part of the epistle used in the Orthodox Church in the rite of marriage "and the wife see that she reverences her husband" (Eph. 5: 33) and other similar New Testament verses supposedly support the spirit of domestic violence toward women. Therefore, two conferences of Catholic bishops in Ireland discovered 7 such "unfortunate" texts in the New Testament which are "liable to give contemporary society an undesirably negative impression regarding women". The Holy Apostle Paul is especially "at fault" who has six texts of which contemporary Catholics disapprove. But the Apostle Peter is also not without fault, since he also believes that wives should be submissive to their husbands and have "a gentle and quiet spirit".

The Irish bishops decided that there is no need to "rewrite" Holy Scripture because these texts "reflect a different time and culture," so they "would be better omitted from the new lectionary". The Catholics are at present in the process of revising the lectionary which is used during their services.

Along with the Irish the Americans also became concerned. They offered the Vatican to provide optional shortened versions of the Colossians and Ephesians readings, minus the most controversial passages.

The Southern Baptists are a bit more conservative than the Catholics and in 1999 they reaffirmed that "a wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband". At that time this declaration brought forth a great indignation over such a backwardness.

A POLITICIAN BISHOP

The newspaper "The Christian News" of September 18th reported that the Greek Archbishop Demetrius, Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America, read opening prayers at the National Convention for the US presidential candidates: Republican as well as Democrat.

On August 2nd this bishop "prayed" in Philadelphia at the Republican convention and on August 16th in Los Angeles, during the Democratic convention.

This newspaper pointed out that the so-called invocations of this "Orthodox" Archbishop not once mentioned Jesus Christ or the Holy Trinity. "Both of them could have been delivered by any Muslim, Jew or Mason".

The invocations pronounced on similar occasions by such a politician as Demetrius' predecessor, Archbishop Iakovos -- were a bit better than the present ones!

According to the newspaper of the Greek Archdiocese in the USA, "The Orthodox Observer" for October 2000, Archbishop Demetrius announced the following blasphemous prayer:

"Let us bow our heads in prayer. Almighty God, creator of all things visible and invisible, Father eternal who brought us from nothingness into being, we profoundly thank You for the unique joy of living and for granting us the superb gift of life and action this very day. Inspire us, as we gather for the Democratic National convention in this City of Angels, to always bear witness to the angelic call to glorify "God in the highest" by living "in peace and good will" with men and women of this blessed country of ours.

We ask You, O King of Kings and Governor of this majestic universe, to keep our minds and souls permanently attached to the ideals of brotherhood and sisterhood; illumine our eyes to envision world filled with justice and peace; direct our feet to always walk in the path of righteousness and truth; make our hands tools of love, care and healing; and keep our arms steadily open in an embrace of every human being.

Grace your servants, Vice President Al Gore and Senator Joseph Lieberman, with the wisdom and courage of the founding fathers, as they champion the American dream in order to offer creative perspectives for progress and happiness to all our fellow citizens. We beseech You, O Eternal Master, to keep in them, and in all of us alive the principle that the public servant is the most free lord of all and subject to none. And at the same time, that the public servant is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to every one.

O God of Peace, when we leave this historic millennium gathering and Convention, a gathering of promise and perspective, remind us that as Your children we all are citizens of the world and that our race, is the human race created by You. Teach us to abide by your golden rule "to love God with all our heart, minds and souls and our neighbor as ourselves". And help us as a nation to become a leading model in translating Your divine rule into daily actions for the benefit of our country and entire human family of our planet Earth. Amen".

This "prayer" pronounced by an "Orthodox Bishop", a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch to the whole of America, deviates very little from the outrageous Masonic ideas and words declared at the Republican convention.

Yet, it is obvious that the Biblical sentence used by this politician was inserted to honor Senator Lieberman, a very observant Jew. No references to the Holy Scripture were made by Archbishop Demetrius at the Republican convention.

WHAT KIND OF MIRACLES DOES THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN BELIEVE IN?

The "Readers Digest" for October published an article entitled "Should You Believe in Miracles?"

According to the polls 84% of adult Americans believe that God performs miracles and 48% reported that they themselves either have seen a miracle or experienced it.

Three quarters of American Catholics, 81% of Evangelists, 54% of Protestants and 43% of non-Christian religions declared that they have prayed to God and that their prayers were heard. Majority prayed for healing of their relatives.

The Vatican and even some Muslim group investigated the authenticity of the miracles.

The first one describes a girl of 12 years of age, who had three operations and was unable to stand up. Bernadette was a student of a Catholic school. The nuns started to pray for her fervently to St. Frances de Sales. After four days of prayers, the sick girl asked God to give her a sign: if she were to be healed, the next day she would hear her favorite song "Forever Young". The radio happened to be very obedient, the song was broadcast and the girl, who was unable to walk, started to jump for joy.

A teenager in 1999 hardly walking managed to drag himself to the altar of "God's Assembly" group. They started to pray for him; he had terrible pain after a knee operation. They were joined by a group of Pentecostals: he was surrounded and the whole community fervently prayed for him. All of a sudden he felt no pain and he could jump.

A Jewish woman Shoshana asked a Lubavicher Rabbi Monahem Shneerson to pray for her, because she has intestinal cancer. She was told to come in the afternoon. Meanwhile, the woman asked to put mezuzahs on her door (a small container with a Biblical verse). Rabbi blessed her and after three days passed, the tests showed she had no cancer.

The article describes also miracles with Muslims.

Regarding the miracles performed for these so-called "Christians" -- Christ Himself warns us in the Gospels that at the Last Judgment many will ask Him if they have not performed miracles and cast out devils in His name and He will tell them that He does not know them. And can it not be said about the "miracles" of Christ's haters that it is obvious that they are performed by the devil?