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AGAIN A REPULSIVE SLANDER

The newspaper *Russkii Vestnik* (Russian Herald) in issue 17-18 has published a full-page article entitled "Vampires" by V. Nevolin. The whole article consists of absolutely ungrounded and vicious slanders against the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, Metropolitan Valentin, and does not mention a single name, except that of the Metropolitan.

The appearance of such an article on the pages of a newspaper with a long-established reputation of publishing well-informed and fact-based articles and as well as its notability for its very correct language tone happened to be a very unexpected and unpleasant surprise.

The whole stream of vicious and dirty slander got its explanation in the lines of the author of this outrageous article. The essence of this article, as it happens to be clear, is the "alternative of the Russian Autonomous Church to the Moscow Patriarchate". Nevolin, no less than ten times uses this phrase in his 'composition' and disparages the ROAC? in every possible manner.

The author of this repulsive filth complains of the shortage of funds to continue his war against the "vampires" and appeals for donations to save ancient Suzdal from them and admits that he already has received support from such organizations as "War Arts" and the "Union of Veterans of the Chechen War". There is good reason to assert that these organizations are departments of the FSB (Federal Security Service as the KGB was renamed after the fall of communism).

Since the new facts were published about the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, it has become quite clear that we are dealing with the Moscow Patriarchate supported by the local 'Security Services'.

It is not without great disdain that Nevolin writes that only the uneducated "babushkas" followed Metropolitan Valentin, but he does not admit that it was not only the "babushkas" who have made a decision between the two 'alternatives'. Suzdal has a bit more than 10,000 residents and out of all of them, only about 500 go to church. Most of them are the flock of Metropolitan Valentin, whom they have known for nearly 30 years.

The Editor-in-Chief of the Church News has sent to the newspaper a letter with explanations regarding this outrageous article and the request to have that letter published.

THE LATEST FROM SUZDAL

The *Vertograd.Razsylka* # 255 of May 13th reported that the initiator of persecutions against the First Hierarchy of the Russian Autonomous Church, the defrocked archpriest Andrew Osetrov was 'ordained' on Great Thursday by Archbishop Eulogy of Vladimir and Suzdal and appointed a rector of the parish in Kideksha at which he continued to serve, despite being defrocked.

"Osetrov conducted his first services in his new capacity on the eve of Pascha. As it was stressed previously, the leadership of the Vladimir diocese of the MP took a rather risky step by admitting into its jurisdiction such an odious person. Osetrov is known for the desecration of several Suzdal's churches, setting fire on the house and chapel, and violation of the election laws. Besides, in Suzdal there is developing a big scandal around the house of Osetrov. It is known that he managed to forcibly put his wife Helen Shipounova into the psychiatric hospital and several of his children into boarding schools and that he keeps as a 'housekeeper' the former nun Sophia Morozov with whom he quite shamelessly walks on the streets of Suzdal in civilian clothes".

The very same *Vertograd* informs us that "from trustworthy sources it became known to *Vertograd* correspondents in Suzdal that in the campaign of persecution started by Osetrov against the First Hierarchy of the ROAC, an active role is being taken by the Federal Security Services of Russia along with the Moscow Patriarchate. With the assistance of its middlemen from Moscow, four men were sent to Suzdal on special orders from the Moscow organization of the Union of Fagan and Chechen wars "Our Cause". These young men (approximately 25-30 years old) were commissioned to lead a campaign of "liquidation" against Metropolitan Valentin in Suzdal".

Unfortunately, instead of the former mayor of Suzdal, Illarionov, who is very friendly toward Metropolitan Valentin, now there is a new mayor, A. Rozhnov, a former chief of the local branch of the Federal Security Service (formerly the KGB). Shortly before the elections, he openly bragged that if he became a mayor, he would "put Valentine behind the bars". Now, Osetrov quite openly collaborates with him.

Vertograd.Razsylka of the news of May 15th reported that on May 14th in Suzdal in its conference hall there was a free concert and also there was shown a video made by Osetrov against Metropolitan Valentin. The hall was nearly full. In the first row there were sitting the new mayor Rozhnov and several new clerics of the MP – Osetrov himself and Dmitry Krasovsky as well as Andrew Panov, who "testified against the Metropolitan Valentin, then at the hearing in the court room retracted his testimony, and then, again, under the pressure of activists of 'Our Cause' again returned to his previous testimony".

After the end of the showing of the film, on the stage appeared an activist of 'Our Cause' and began to insult and curse the First Hierarchy of the ROAC. He finished his speech with the appeal to 'men' to get together and punish the 'molester'.

Then Vertograd reports about an extremely brave speech of 12 year-old boy Ivan Saveliev, who "said in a loud voice to be heard in the hall: 'Suzdal's Saint John was also betrayed by an archpriest, and now, the former-archpriest Osetrov in the same manner has betrayed Vladyka Valentin. Now I will go more often to his church, and will pray there. I have been defending him and I will defend him until I die". The leader of this affair tried to interrupt the teenager, but John reminded him that he himself asked not to be interrupted during his speech, therefore he has to obey to this rule also toward other speakers. 'You are shameless people, Ivan Saveliev concluded his speech, "and never in my lifetime will I attend your concerts, and I suggest that others do not attend them either'. In response to Saveliev's words Osetrov and company bursted in a loud laughter. Tearful Ivan left the hall under supportive exclamations from the on-lookers".

This boy was supported by other children, who pointing to Osetrov and Krasovsky, yelled: 'Get out, defrocked ones!"

If any one of our readers would like in any way to thank this extremely brave and smart boy for this heroic act – we would be happy to forward him a letter.

The Editor-in-Chief of "Church News" occasionally gets telephone calls or letters from Russia and the Ukraine from clergymen of the Moscow Patriarchate. They say that they would have joined Metropolitan Valentin, but "there are too many scandals around his name". To this the answer is that the main purpose of deliberately creating these 'scandals' is to prevent them from joining the canonical Russian Church.

So far, we have never happened to hear or read of any "scandals" involving the bishops of ROCOR in Russia. And it is obvious why this does not occur: the ROCOR bishops do not present themselves in any way as an "alternative" to the Moscow Patriarchate; therefore, she has never been concerned about them.

It also became known that the "authorities" are not only pressuring the children to testify falsely against the Metropolitan, but they also pressure his lawyers to stop defending him.

FROM THE LIFE OF THE TRUE LATVIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

According to report of Vertograd (#250) of May 1st, the Autonomous Latvian Orthodox Church which is a part of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church, for 7 long years has been seeking legal registration but has not yet gotten it due to interferences of the Moscow Patriarchate. The civil authorities create difficulties at every possible occasion.

So, for the Paschal service, the Autonomous Latvian Orthodox Church's administration had to obtain a special permission from the municipal office of Daugavpils in order to have the processions around the church building, because it was equated to the civil demonstrations and marches!

This time, according to sources, a woman "managing the affairs of the City Council demanded from the faithful of the Autonomous Latvian Orthodox Church that they fill out a new, modernized questionnaire. Besides the route, which is a part of the service, they were to indicate the end purpose and time of the procession, as well as the amount of the faithful who will attend. Besides, there was to be given the passport information of all of the leaders of the church service and their assistants".

After filling up of this outrageous questionnaire, the permission was given. It is quite obvious that one has good reasons to doubt the sincerity of the "democracy" in the free(?) Latvian state.

THE "SUCCESS" OF THE ROCOR(L)

The Moscow newspaper Russkii Vestnik # 19-20 on the first page in its edition published the Paschal Epistle of Patriarch Alexis Ridiger (which is not at all surprising) , but on the second page – for the first time in the ROCOR's history there was published also the Paschal Epistle of Metropolitan Laurus! Immediately after his election to the post of First Hierarch of the ROCOR – several Russian newspapers with obvious pleasure have reported of his election and expressed the hope for near possibility of union of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad, or rather the absorption of the ROCOR into the Moscow Patriarchate.

In the process of the "progress" of relations of ROCOR(L) with "World Orthodoxy" and the Moscow Patriarchate, in the suburbs of Paris, Meudone, according to the Vertograd.Razsylka #254 of May 8th, there "happened an unprecedented concelebrations". The open sympathizer of the MP, Bishop Ambrose of Geneva and Western Europe concelebrated with Archbishop Sergius (Konovalov), a member of Constantinople Exarchate (the former-Bishop Eulogy's jurisdiction) on the akathistus in front of the miraculous icon of Holy Virgin of the Sign of Kursk. Bishop Ambrose also invited for this prayer act the head of the Moscow Patriarchate parishes in France, Innocent, and Bishop of Korsun, who however didn't show up.

As it is known, the Ecumenical Patriarch among all the 'Orthodox' Churches is the most active participant in the Ecumenical Movement!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED

(A letter to the President of the Synod of Bishops, Metropolitan Vitaly on May 17/30th, 1994)

Your Eminence, dear Vladyko!

I thank you for your willingness to respond to my letters and for not being too much angry with them.

I do not recall that we had met at the beginning or at the end of the war. I also believe that at that time it was doubtful that Bishop Nathaniel was to be reached too. In any case, I was not an optimist: certainly, for me, as usual, the main enemies were the international powers, who have provoked the world war. With Bishop Nathaniel at least I had had a brief acquaintance, when he came to the Council with Archbishop Nestor during lifetime of Metropolitan Anthony. I had met you only after the end of the war, but even then, this acquaintance was of a very short duration, because you lingered in Europe.

Therefore, I do not know from where you had the impression of my supposed "German sympathies". Are you not mixing me up with John Shakhovskoy, who had indeed published a sensational article in the sense of which you are quite groundlessly ascribing to me?

As far as I can remember myself, I have never hated anyone. I also did not "hate" all the enemies of Russia, such as is nourished by the Western nations, as for example Germans hated Russians.

I had only made a mistake in evaluating the duration of the German victories – I was relatively young at that time. However in the Synod we were extremely careful and did not give Germans any promises, of which they could later remind us. Personally, I never had any sympathy toward Germans and I could not. Because of them my father was taken by the Bolsheviks and for more than a year I didn't know what happened to my two daughters and my sister. After their miraculous return to Yugoslavia, the Germans who occupied it, made a search in Metropolitan Anastassy's quarters (a fictitious one, just to scare), but a very thorough in my home and the Synod office. Then, for more than a week myself and whole my family were under the house arrest. At this search a lot of irreplaceable documents of historical importance were taken and never returned. All visitors to our family were not allowed to enter and were registered by the German police.

The difference between us is in fact, that at the beginning you accepted Bishop Valentin and his clergy with trust and love (of what he gratefully remembers you) and later, under the influence of insinuations of Averianov (a probable agent and an undoubtful provocateur) through Bishop Barnabas – you branded him with the stamp of the accused one, at the same time, not formally charging him. Despite this, his diocese grew up to almost a hundred parishes, something that was never taken into consideration by the Synod, as if these parishes did not consist of living Orthodox souls. The parishes of Bishops Lazarus and Valentin, despite the obstacles, not only do not fall apart, but with no assistance on part of the Synod have continued to grow already for the third year. Nevertheless, the Synod continued to treat their founders as the accused ones: there was no communication with them, they received no information and their questions and petitions were not answered and they were not even supplied with the antimimension clothes! During all this time Bishop Valentin (as he was complaining to me in his letter) received only 12 clothes.

While the Synod kept silent during Bishop Barnabas' simultaneous hunting together with the Moscow Patriarchate after the Russian Bishops and did not respond to anything – they were working intensely, at which time, with unparalleled and in no way deserved sternness, we started to interrupt their labor and, moreover, without being interested in the consequences for the mission they undertook and the existence of parishes which have joined them. If there were any problems over there, and they brought into existence by the interference of some of our hierarchs in the matters of the Russian Bishops. Our Synod tried to regulate them only through the suspensions of the ones offended, and it was not guided by the basic canons.

Not to consider the growth of the life of the Russian Hierarchs as well as an effort to lock them up within limits of a schism might bring about the opposite reaction in Russia. It is amazing that so far they have not totally removed themselves from the Synod.

We have never declared a stoppage of ordinations for Russia, but it is already three years since, under various pretexts even the list of candidates was not approved, although Bishop Valentin has brought such a list and even brought with him one of the candidates (Archimandrite Theodore) whom everybody liked. But life still didn't stop. It is only, that we didn't not pay any attention to it and when we wanted to suspend them, no one thought even of replacing the existing Bishops.

Bishops Laurus and Daniel were in Russia, and they have seen many parishes of the Russian Bishops, but was there shown due interest toward their reports? I was startled that some Hierarchs during the Synod meeting tried to interrupt the reading of an indeed long, but so much needed report of Archbishop Laurus with the exclamations: "That is enough"! Probably the members of the Synod have decided that this is a matter which can be "filed into the archive" and stay there. Is it realistic and does it correspond with the pastoral spirit to approach in this way a matter that concerns tens of thousands of our Orthodox compatriots?

Why not get busy in order to establish ecclesiastical life, instead of expecting anarchy, as you are afraid of?

No one is going to argue about the difficulties of your ministry. But, there were similar difficulties also during the tenure of three your predecessors, who found my work for them useful.

Permit me to disagree with you when you assert that "when I retired you, I was the voice of all the Episcopate".

This "resolution" was made not by the Council of Bishops (without any declaration of accusation), but by the extended Synod meeting, which already was by itself a rude violation of basic rules about retiring a Bishop, who was a ruling hierarch of part of the Eastern-American Diocese and had the powers of a ruling Bishop.

When I was leaving for retirement, some Bishops told me of their disagreement with it. In particular, from Archbishop Anthony of Geneva (your first Deputy President) I know that he himself and another hierarchs tried to keep my position

for me, but it was **you** who would not agree. Despite some of my disagreements with Archbishop Anthony, we always stayed in friendly relationship.

Your second Deputy President, Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago, wrote a resolute and sharp protest to you also. So, to speak of the "voice of the whole Episcopate" – one can do so only by stretching the facts. Therefore, when I agreed to follow your wish and ask for the retirement, I did not feel that 'the whole Episcopate does not want me'.

What you write about John of Smolensk (a renowned canonist - Ch.N.), of course, is well known to me, but following your opinions to their logical end, one can come to the conclusion that no one of the Russians may be consecrated and this, probably explains, why, under your leadership, for almost three years we could not appoint any one in Russia. If we live directed only by fears and mistrusts, nothing can be contributed to the life of the Church. Such an approach led Bishop Barnabas to abuse and reject all the Russian Bishops, except himself alone. Only those who do not want to build act in this manner. And all of us wonder: why have you, as the President, instead of following the demands of Statutes of the ROCOR to see that the canons are observed and the violators punished, have behaved quite opposite and have always protected Bishop Barnabas, instead of having him defrocked.

As much as I know human nature, your unprecedented and total ignorance concerning the crimes of Bishop Barnabas could be nothing but a difficult temptation for the Russian Hierarchs, who have been treated only as the accused, and their reports were not even dignified with the affirmation of having been received while the grave transgressions of Bishop Barnabas were systematically ignored.

To endure such a situation is difficult even for two months, and even more so for more than two years and, moreover, under the difficult struggle for survival. And all of this amidst the background of the unprecedented protection being given to Bishop Barnabas, despite of all of his violations of the canons? Where was the justice?

You are concerned about the possible future disagreements between the Bishops in Russia and reject the new candidates while you have no candidates for yourself even for Australia. In the case of the death of the aged Bishop John, there is no replacement for South America. Who will replace you in Canada in case of your death? Who is to head the Syracuse-Trinity diocese in case of death of Archbishop Laurus? We do not have candidates for our own cathedra, which very soon might be empty, not to speak of immense Russia. Besides, we have plenty of fast-growing problems abroad to which no one wants to pay any attention, but when they do, it might be already too late. There are plenty of minuses in our life. I have mentioned just a few in my letters. And you have **refuted not one of the mentioned ones**.

Nothing can be built upon mistrust only, Vladyko!

After the reading of the declarations, ukases and epistles of Bishops Lazarus and Valentin, which are totally in accord with the principles of our Synod, the mistrustful words in your letter sound really monstrously, when you state that "What can unite them, and probably will unite them, is only the sole invisible hand of the KGB"!

Here one can say about your words, that truly "their own have not recognized their own" and this mistake will be deeply tragic, especially, if it is accepted by all our Episcopate.

Contrary to your words, the Patriarchal Decree was issued in Russia as a directive for the future. When it was written, all the administrative organs were still in place, but it seems, the Patriarch foresaw what was threatening the Church and issued a directive how to restore the Church out of nothing.

You unjustly affirm that in Russia "there happened to be not a single unimportant group of two or three Bishops in USSR, who would have used this Patriarchal Ukaze". We know quite for sure, that up to the middle of the 70's in Russia there were Catacomb Bishops, who lived particularly according to the Patriarchal Regulation. Particularly in these years a group of 14 clergymen approached Metropolitan Philaret with a petition to be accepted in his jurisdiction because the Bishop under whom they were before had died and no matter how much they searched for another Catacomb Bishop – they did not find one. To this group belonged our Bishop Lazarus. The fact, that due to unprecedented persecutions of the Church, we did not know all the Catacomb Bishops does not mean that they were non-existent. If they had not lived according to Patriarch Tikhon's Regulation, then undoubtedly they would not have been able to hold out for so long and preserve the true Faith and faithfulness to the Holy Church.

The Ukaze of Patriarch preserved the Catacomb Church and gave the basis for the Church Abroad in the general conscience and mind of the Orthodox Churches.

The "Statutes" of the Church Abroad give no instructions to you for governing the Church in Russia. Such are made only in the Patriarchal Ukaze, which was issued for Russia.

Father Constantine brought to Your Eminence the writings of Bishop Valentin, filled with love and humility, and he has sent me their copies. This makes it easier for you to solve the problem of uniting all the powers in order to together restore the Russian Church, and have as the aim only this, but not the aspiration for retributions. At present, everything depends upon the sincerity of your sense of responsibility, love and sacrifice. And what might happen when there are 20 and more bishops in Russia – it is too early to worry about that. Then, in any case, their work will not be your responsibility.

You have accepted your mission with the pride and a high opinion of yourself. The Lord might replace you with some one else. But there is little time: the end is near. If during your leadership there will be gathered 20 Hierarchs, you will be glorified. But if you will refuse the collaboration offered to you in Russia – a major part of the flock will leave you. Already, with a troubled heart we see the signs of it.

I ask your pardon for again taking up your time. I do not feel sorry for my little strength, if only I could help you in the work entrusted to you by God in the restoration of the Russian Church.

Asking for your holy prayers,
Your brother in Christ,
+ Bishop Gregory

THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT FINALLY RECOGNIZED THE JERUSALEM PATRIARCH

The newspaper of the Serbian Exarchate in USA, "The Path of Orthodoxy" for May 2002 reported that, according to the Jewish newspaper Ha'aretz of April 16th, at the cabinet meeting on Sunday night only four ministers have approved the election of Irineos as Patriarch of Jerusalem, even if there "are serious flaws with his appointment".

It is considered, that the recognition was made under the pressure of the USA Secretary of State, Collin Powell, since "the political circumstances have changed".

THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCH TRIED TO GRAB HOLY FIRE FROM THE HANDS OF JERUSALEM PATRIARCH IRENEOS

According to the Greek language Jerusalem Shloz, this year, during the service in the Holy Sepulcher on the Great Saturday, there happened a big scandal.

As usual, the Patriarch Ireneos went into holy Sepulcher, and, after the holy fire descended, and he walked out with the burning candles, the Armenian patriarch, who tried to snatch the candles from his hands, attacked him. The situation worsened when the Patriarch would not let the candles go and the surrounding faithful rushed at the Armenian Patriarch, who had wanted to be the one who would distribute the holy fire. They beat him up with their fists, and, with the help of police who immediately arrived, he was thrown out of the church, while Patriarch Ireneos, keeping his external cool, proceeded with the distribution of the holy fire.

For nearly two millennia the holy fire has come down upon Christ's tomb, and it has always been ministered by the Jerusalem Patriarchs.

In the sixth century, on the day of Great Saturday, the Armenians came to the church early in the morning, put out all the vigil lamps, and locked the entrance to the Christ's Tomb. The Greek clergy and the people came on time, but could not enter the church. Then, remaining outside, the bishops present made an emergency meeting of the Synod. It was resolved to perform the service outside of the church. During the service, the Patriarch was holding the unlit candles. Then, unexpectedly, one of the columns at the entrance to the church was hit by lightning and the Patriarch's candles also lit up. The jubilant faithful received the holy fire, and as the reminder of this miracle and to shame the Armenians – until our times one can see a spot where the lightning hit the column.

It is speculated that the Armenians decided upon this recent impudent move, because they thought that the new Patriarch was a stranger in Jerusalem, and the lesson from the sixth century didn't profit them in any way!

After the service, the Patriarch said: "They do not know with whom they are dealing. We are ready to shed our blood to preserve our privileges and rights."

The holy fire was given also to the representative of Athens, Archbishop Christodulos, who flew on one of the Greek airlines and was received in Greece with honors fit for a head of state.

THE CATHOLIC SCANDAL NOT ONLY DID NOT CALM DOWN, BUT IS GROWING

As we reported in our April issue #3(104), the scandal involving the hierarchy and clergy of the Roman Catholics not only has not calmed down but, on contrary, is taking an even more explosive character. During this period, due to a demand from Vatican, the Bishop of Mainz (Germany), Francis Eisenbach, had to step down. It seems he was performing the rite of exorcism over a Protestant woman and badly compromised himself.

More than 2,000 catholic priests in America alone, are under the investigation due to moral accusations. The Catholic Church has already paid more than a billion of dollars in out-of-court settlements. This has forced the Vatican to wake up. The Pope formally condemned pedophilia and homosexuality and also expressed his regrets and apologies to the victims. At the same time, he urgently summoned to the Vatican all the American Cardinals for an special conference and instruction for the future activities of Catholicism. At the end of April the Pope, who one by one listened to their reports, received the cardinals. Then followed the discussions how to deal with the accused clergymen.

Encouraged by the Pope's decisive words of condemnation concerning moral transgressions, most of the Catholic lay people and even some Cardinals – have expected that this Conference will end with clear and exact decisions. However, for many the Conference happened to bring a great disappointment. All the Papal "thunders and lightning" against the criminal clergymen in a considerable degree were annulled by his interpretation that 'one should never forget of the sacrament of penance' and that 'a priest, who repented of his amorality—should not be removed from his parish'!

Frightened by the common indignation against the Catholic episcopate which protected the criminals, a number of hierarchs declared that as soon as they find out about such cases, they will immediately refer them to the local authorities. However, such declarations met with criticism on part of the Vatican.

On May 18th, the New York Times reported that the magazine La Civiltà Cattolica has published a huge 12-page article by one of the renowned Vatican's Jesuit-lawyers, Fr. Ghirland, in which the actions of the American episcopate were criticized. He said that if a priest was reassigned to a new parish after he had been treated because of the sexual abuses, it would not be fair to have "his reputation ruined by having his background revealed to a new parish". He is a dean of the Gregorian University of Rome and has a canon law chair. This Jesuit immediately got support on the part of Archbishop Julian Hernandez, the head of the Vatican council.

This article is considered to be of the utmost importance, because it is common knowledge that anything published in it, is previously censured by the Vatican's secretariat of state, and it is viewed by the American episcopate as a demand to cease calls for measures that would prevent crimes.

In June, a special meeting of American episcopate is to be held in Dallas, which is supposed to create a new plan for solving this problem. As it is said in the newspaper, the American dioceses are very rich and influential, therefore, their decisions will have important influence upon regulations for other Roman dioceses.

In the majority of cases, the American bishops were sending the criminal-priests for psychiatric treatments and, after that, they were appointed to a new parish. Jesuit Gherland believes that an accused priest should not be forced to take the psychological test because it is a violation of his rights to privacy under the canon law and should be stopped, while the proposal to transfer the material of guilty clerics to prosecutors is the result of "an emotional wave of public clamor".

All of this, resulted in countless articles and letters to editors of various newspapers and magazines of America. At the same time, Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law and New York's Cardinal Egan are officially accused of protection of criminals, whom they have been for decades transferring from one parish to another, as soon as there were some accusations against them. Both Cardinals were forced to make official depositions to the courts and both referred to their total lack of knowledge of complaints about clergymen, while transferring all the responsibility upon the employees of the diocese. The New York Times newspaper of April 18th did publish a number of stenographic records from the deposition of Cardinal Law. To the majority of the questions, he reacts by saying that he does not remember or admits to no knowledge of the case!

The same newspaper, but of May 22nd, reported that because of the shaky financial situation, the Cardinal of Chicago has offered for 15 million dollars to sell his residence, a mansion in which there was a diocesan center since 1885.

As a result, there is more and more heard the voice of lay people that it is necessary to abolish the Catholic obligation of celibacy for clergy and to accept of the eastern practice of married clergy and, also, hurriedly to convene the Third Vatican Council. The newspaper National Catholic Reporter of May 10th informs us that 31 Catholic bishops, including 1 Cardinal, petitioned the Pope to as soon as possible convene a Council that would straighten out the course of obviously sinking Catholic vessel. The initiators of such a Council hope that by the year 2003 they will collect a sufficient amount of signatures to influence the changes and also material to discuss the most important themes.

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY "SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT" BY THE MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE

The newspaper Russkii Vestnik #19-20 has published a huge article under the title "the passions of the amphibious" regarding the problems in connection with the development of Orthodox education in Russia (4 full pages) signed by I. Grishin and S. Matveyev. The article is a very solid and well-grounded critique of the Synod's department for religious education and catechization of the Russian Orthodox Church, which is headed by Archimandrite John (Economtsev).

The authors quite correctly state that "on the activity of this department and its prestige on the field of education and in the society in general, much is depending on how much time will be necessary to restore the spiritual basics of the national school, without which there is impossible to revive the Russian society and Russian state. . . And here, with the regret we have to assert, that Fr. John (Economtsev) at least is not able to cope with the problems, which were facing him and his department ten years ago. The activity of the department he is heading in the field of national education, is very little noticeable in the Russian society. In its external expression, probably it is manifested only with the one visible annual event – the Nativity educational lectures. And what about the everyday occurrences?

Everyday occurrences are the issue of short commentaries about the education and religion, the basic idea of which is that one can introduce the Russian school children to the Orthodox Christianity only outside the limits of basic educational programs and exclusively, outside the school time. It seems that this discriminative situation for the Russian people is quite satisfactory for Fr. John Economtsev and the employees of his department. Indeed, why busy himself with the revival of spiritually moral basics in the secular school, to actively work in the field of the Orthodox enlightenment of the Russian state studies? This demands a lot of effort and carries with it a lot of difficulties. It is much better to issue pages-long recommendations on how to use the school's space for the catechumen's courses. Although such courses are much better held in the churches, where there is an entirely different surrounding than in the schools, than sitting behind the school desks, which very often are marked over with the dirtiest curse words. . . "

Turning again to the activity of the Nativity educational events, the authors inform us that Fr. John Economtsev "annually reports" on his work to the Patriarch and the Holy Synod. But this event from year to year becomes more like a protocol, separated from life and always departs more and more from the problems of spiritual revival of the national educational system into important, but somewhat private matters. It is easy to be convinced of this if one looks through the programs of lectures for the past 3-4 years. There are the very same sections, the same participants, who once a year communicate about programs of mutual interest. And concerning the revival of the basics for national education – the matter is concluded in 1-2 sections that are also very distant from general education and concern non-governmental education".

It is obvious that Alexis Ridiger himself as well as his Synod are in no way interested in the work and "progress" of the head of one of the most important of their departments.

A bit further, the authors of this killing critique of the head of Synod's educational department and catechization of the MP put a question: "May be Fr. John Economtsev is simply out of place? May be, as a monk he simply has no time to bring Orthodoxy into Russian society and the secular school?" However it becomes clear that "in particular cases Fr. John Economtsev is extremely active in the society. The matter is his activity as a man of letters".

After listing a number of published massive works of F. Economtsev, the authors, before quoting them on three pages of the newspaper, wisely advise the readers: "And now, reader, you have to gather all your courage, will and patience. Since it is possible you might not know the previous writings of Archimandrite J. Economtsev, you might faint. Faint and throw up because of the text itself as well as in a much greater degree because of the one who wrote this text. You can become physically sick from the feeling of sadness and offense for our (MP) abused by such words and deeds degraded Church".

One can say that such dirt is possible to read in the books sold by stores which specialize in selling only pornographic "literature". We are sure that the readers of the Church News will trust the authors of the article about Economtsev, as well as us, and will not object that we didn't want to stain the pages of our issues with quotations of such unrepeatable dirt.

No matter how strange it may seem, from the article of Grishin and Matveyev, we find out that this person, who for more than a decade is disgracing not only the name of the Moscow Patriarchate, but even the simply name of a Christian person, until present time still has not been deposed or replaced and remains in his position.

THE HYPOCRITICAL MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND THE CATHOLICS

The newspaper *Russkaya Mysl* (Russian Mind) in issue #3495 reported that in the month of May the Roman Pope elevated the four apostolic administrations in Russia to the rank of dioceses, which he united into one Metropolis with the central seat in Moscow. The Catholic dioceses received very unusual names: "the Archdiocese of the Mother of God" (center in Moscow) and the other three got the names of suffragan dioceses (diocese of St. Clement in Saratov, Transfiguration in Novosibirsk, St. Joseph's in Irkutsk). As it is explained rather openly, it was not done to irritate the Moscow Patriarchate.

This reorganization of Catholics in Russia immediately resulted in outrage of Moscow Patriarchate. The head of Foreign Relations Department of the MP, Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk in his interview to "Vesti" (News) declared that the organization of the Catholic dioceses on Russia's territory ". . . presents a danger for the whole land" (!) "since every spiritual separation within the nation always has the political consequences. And it is the most dangerous, when our spirit ceases to be our spirit, when we are losing the spiritual identification, the spiritual identity. And to divide the people according to religious adherence – means to weaken the nation"!

An amazing declaration by an archpastor, who is in no way concerned about the perdition of the multitude of souls that would be lost by heretical propaganda: all he has in mind – is "political consequences". May be he should in the first place get busy with the sleeping "educational department of the Patriarchate" and not send to Assisi three important official delegates of the MP for concelebrations and prayers with heretics and even non-Christians (Innocent of Korsun, Pitirim of Volokolamsk, and Hilarion of Kerch), who on the very next day after this outrageous prayers were received by the Pope.

According to the newspaper "National Catholic Reporter" of May 10th, Cardinal Walter Kasper has begun to restore the shaky "dialogues" with the MP and even, behind the scenes to arrange the preparations for the "historical" meeting of Ridiger and the Roman Pope. As per the words of the Catholic Cardinal announced on the Vatican radio: "If we don't talk, we cannot reach any agreement. So for us the road is open, and we can think of preparing a meeting between John Paul II And Alexei II". Cardinal Kasper also acknowledged that there are some "signs of hope" in recent weeks and also disclosed that there had been new ecumenical contacts through indirect channels. "We are hoping to have regular contacts in a few weeks or months".

The English language Vatican magazine "30 Days" has published two very extensive articles regarding relations between the MP and the Catholics. The first article is a very detailed interview with Cardinal Casper by the correspondent of this magazine and adds nothing new to the information already widely available. The second article, on the other hand, gives interesting data.

It became known, that on New Year's day, there arrived with the special blessing of Alexis Ridiger the 'Orthodox' choir which sang during the papal mass and after that, the Pope received the singers in a special audience. This event was

interpreted in Rome as a favorable sign of intention. The second "favorable" act, as it is related just now, was not the attendance at the prayer in Assisi, but the actual participation in it by the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate. After that the Pope received only the Uniate-"patriarchs", but he made an exception for Metropolitan Pitirim, who was also invited to the reception. At it the Pope directly asked Metropolitan Pitirim if he, the Pope, could come to Moscow?

In our latest issue of "Church News" #4(105) we wrote of the Paschal greeting which Ridiger has sent to the Roman Pope. The latter immediately responded by congratulating Ridiger on his name day. He wrote: "I send this heartfelt message to you, Holiness, with the most fraternal greetings on occasion of the Feast of Saint Alexis. I pray that the Lord will lead us beyond the difficulties we are currently experiencing to proceed with dialogue with a view toward future collaboration for the attainment of the unity to which we aspire". At this time, it also became known that besides the already opened four Catholic dioceses in Russia, Catholics plan to open five more additional ones: in Petersburg, Krasnodar, Kaliningrad, Chliabinsk and Vladivistok.

In his interview, Kasper stated that there are in Russia 1,300,000 Catholics. Catholic Archbishop Kondrusiewicz mentions the amount of 600,000 and the Moscow Patriarchate speaks of an even smaller amount. Certainly, all of them are lying, but probably this time the MP is closer to the truth than the Catholics!

Meanwhile, the Patriarchate is cleverly playing a double game. Due to her unofficial insistence, the civil authorities have revoked the visa for Cardinal Kasper, who was expected to arrive to Moscow, and at the airport, the authorities annulled the visa for the Italian priest Stephen Caprio and the Polish bishop Jerzy Mazur, who had to go back to Poland. At the same time, some Orthodox priests organized loud demonstrations against the Catholics.

The newspaper Kommersant-Daily of April 24th reported that "yesterday the representatives of the ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation and the Russian Orthodox Church have declared that they are in no way implicated in the case of the removal of the Russian visa of Jerzy Mazur. This decision was made by the competent Russian authorities which have "serious concerns about the activities of this dignified representative of Vatican".

The Internet report of SMI.ru of April 22nd and also the Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper) of the same date express an interesting view of these events, namely: "It is quite possible that *the federal authorities spin a thin web of intrigue regarding the Moscow Patriarchate*. It is common knowledge that Moscow is interested in the urgent visit of Pope to Russia. Putin already said, he would have invited the pontiff long ago if not for the opposition on part of leadership of the ROC. According to him, John Paul II does not want to come to Russia without the approval of the MP.

In developing a wide scandal with the Vatican, *Moscow puts the leadership of the ROC in a very difficult situation, since in this campaign against the Catholics, she will be accused in the very first place. In order to make up for this scandal, the Moscow Patriarchate will have to make toward Vatican a good gesture of goodwill. In other words, she will have to agree to the visit of the Pope.*

The international scandal is brewing indeed. The Vatican, through its State Secretary, called on the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Vitaly Levitin, to get his explanation, but he responded with insistence that he knows nothing about these events. The Conference of Catholic bishops in Europe also responded with the loud protest insisting that "there is an organized campaign against the Catholic Church in Russia".

The annulment of visas, even for few Catholic priests, with the threat that others also might take place could actually liquidate Catholicism in Russia. Of the 200 Catholic priests in Russia (and this for 4 dioceses!) – only 30 are Russians and are legal citizens. The other 170 are new arrivals from Western countries who came to spread Catholic propaganda.

The Serbian Patriarch Paul, decided to support the MP in her difficult situation and has sent a long letter to the Vatican in which he expresses "concern about the development of relations between the Orthodox-Catholic and the Roman – Catholic churches in the world. You Holiness, undoubtedly knows the many difficulties there are in our mutual relations and in the official theological dialogue that were created not only by the activities of the Uniates or Greek-Catholic communities in the Eastern Europe and other places, but also the efforts to grant to these communities an ecclesiological character and legitimacy, which they can not have from the point of either from the historical or the theological point of view".

However, how is one to explain that according to information from Belgrade, Metropolitan John of Zagreb and Ljubiana on February 17th served a Liturgy in the Catholic Ursuline convent of St. Ambrose in Milan? With him were concelebrating two clergymen of the Serbian Patriarchate, and the Liturgy was attended by the Catholic bishop of Milan, Francesco Kokopolimero, and one Catholic priest? And that is not all: it is expected that such services are to occur regularly in the future! What reason is there for a Serbian "Orthodox" bishop to serve a Liturgy in a foreign land and in the church of the heretical Catholics? Probably, the Patriarch Barnabas, poisoned by the Catholics, and Archimandrite Justin Popovich, canonized by the Serbian Church, have "turned over in their graves"!

UNCLEAR STORY OF THE "ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA"

According to information received by us, on the second day of Pascha in Anchorage (Alaska) died the retired Bishop Innocent, Our reliable informant related, that during only one year, Bishop Innocent was suspended twice.

According to the newsletter of the parish of Holy Trinity church in Reston, VA, Bishop Innocent, while in Alaska, was to meet in a hotel with his lawyer on the day of Holy Friday, because he was suing two clerics of the OCA. There is also

information, that at the same time, he was called to appear at the end of May at a trial on the part of St. Tikhon's monastery in Pennsylvania. There was also a warning, that if he fails to appear for trial, it will be held in absentia.

His death was discovered when he did not show up to the meeting with his lawyer. Upon entering his hotel room, it was discovered that he had died. He was only 52 years old.

It is amazing, that a rather young person dies at a time when he is suing the clerics of his Church and, at the same time, is himself summoned for a trial. No matter how strange it is, there is no mentioning of his illness or strange circumstances of his death. It seems that the "OCA" itself and the local authorities decided to hush up this event.

The career of Bishop Innocent consisted of a number of contradictions. In 1995 there were a number of protests against his ordination. He used to belong to the Carpatho-Russian diocese of the Greek Archdiocese. Although the retired Alaskan bishop Gregory Afonsky objected to his ordination, Innocent was ordained nevertheless.

Also the bulletin the "Orthodox Church in America" was informed about his repose, but did not react in any way. Nothing was reported in Alaska either.

Amazingly, a priest who had recently left the OCA along with his parish in Old Harbor and joined the Church Abroad performed his funeral service.

The sermon, given during the memorial service by Bishop Nicholas, whose jurisdictional adherence we were not able to ascertain (although it seems that he belongs to the "OCA"), is rather interesting.

"We hear these joyous hymns of Paschal Services even in the service of the panikhida and we almost forget that we have come here to pray for the soul of man who chose to separate himself from the Church and to die without reconciling himself with her. We should be celebrating this service with the body of the newly departed Bishop here in the center of the church. Instead, his body was taken away by people who followed a path like his and willfully alienated themselves from the Church. It is my prayer, that when I die, I would be placed here in the center of the church and that numerous faithful should surround me saddened at the loss of their beloved Vladyka.

"Certainly, there is no one today who did not, at one time, love and respect Bishop Innocent. At one time or another, he came to disappoint many of you. As a Hierarch myself, I constantly pray that I don't ever become a disappointment to my clergy or my flock. It is a hard thing to understand how human beings can and do become disappointments to each other. But, whether or not he was a disappointment to us or failed us in any way, two things are true: first, it is time to put this chapter of history of our diocese to rest. We must move on. We must begin the work that is at hand for the healing and building up Christ's Church in Alaska. Secondly, each of us is obliged as an Orthodox Christian to pray for other Orthodox Christians – both the living and the departed. Regardless of what our feeling were for Bishop Innocent, our obligation before God is to pray for his soul. . . ."

This sermon is definitely a unique one!

Bishop Innocent came from a family of Uniates and therefore is buried in the family plot on the Uniate cemetery in Pennsylvania.

On the three photographs of this unusual panikhida we have received, there are: one bishop, two subdeacons, three priests and two women. Actually the church was empty!

To our question if Metropolitan Theodosius really retired because of poor health, our informer suggested that most probably his retirement was made necessary by the fact that the financial scandal with a substantial amount of funds, which were managed with no control by the Metropolitan, is still not settled.