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**CONTENTS:**

CHRISTMAS EPISTLE  
APPEAL OF THE FIRST HIERARCH OF AROC  
AN ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH By Bishop Gregory  
KALEIDOSCOPE OF CHURCH EVENTS  
EPISTLE TO THE FLOCK FROM THE COUNCIL OF ROCOR BISHOPS  
RESPONSE BY THE COUNCIL OF ROCOR BISHOPS  
IMPUDENT LIE OF ARCHBISHOP MARK  
INTERVIEW WITH ARCHPRIEST MICHAEL ARDOV  
AN UNEQUAL MARRIAGE  
DECLARATION Of Archbishop Mark to the Synod  
DESECRATION OF MONUMENTS  
FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS

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**CHRISTMAS EPISTLE**  
**OF HIS EMINENCE VALENTIN, METROPOLITAN OF SUZDAL AND VLADIMIR,**  
**FIRST HIERARCH OF THE AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**To all children of the Church of Christ, in the Fatherland and in the Diaspora**

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men (Lk. 2:14)

Beloved in the Lord, my dear brethren-Archpastors, zealous Pastors and servants before the Altar of the Lord,  
 Reverend Monks and Nuns, brothers and sisters of the Church of Christ!

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 1:3). I make bold to address you with this sacred Apostolic greeting in this "chosen and holy day" of the great feast of the Lord's Nativity. Reliving this great event yet again, and contemplating it with the eyes of the spirit, this event that has become the central point of all human history, we are filled with reverent trepidation and holy joy. With trepidation – because the great mystery of God's incarnation is unfathomable; with joy, because we are no longer alone in the face of death and evil, "for God is with us!"

I would remind you, beloved, of the words that the Angel of God pronounced – that bright herald of heavenly mysteries – almost two thousand years ago. These words were directed to all people, but firstly to Christians, that is, to you and to me." I announce to you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for Savior, Who is Christ the Lord, was born to you today in the city of David. And this shall be a sign to you: Ye shall find the newborn Bebe wrapped in swaddling clothes laying in the manger" (Lk. 2:10-12). The first to hear these words were the pious shepherds of Bethlehem, who with contrite hearts entered into the humble cave of Bethlehem and worshiped the Divine Infant. But how much more blessed we are, who not only worship our incarnate Lord and Savior, but also commune His honorable Body and Blood, becoming one flesh with Him! Here, in this holy temple, in this dwelling place of God's glory, on the holy altar table, surrounded by the bodiless powers who are unseen by the eyes of flesh, as once in the cave of Bethlehem, lies the very King of Glory – He Who created the heavens and earth, Who gifted us with life, even unto eternity. "For verily I say unto you that many prophets and righteous ones desired to see what ye see, and saw not, and hear what ye hear, and hared not" (Mt. 13: 17).

Can it be that we "who are burdened by our abundant sins" are to be found more worthy than the great Prophets and righteous Saints of the Old Testament with whom God conversed "face to face"? Of course not! The closer that we came to the end of time, we see that lawlessness only increases in the world and this dramatic process cannot but involve us as well. Without question, the Prophets and the Righteous of the Old Testament lead incomparably holier lives than we do, and were incomparably more worthy of the grace of the New Testament, the fulfillment of which is the Divine mystery of the Eucharist. But the judgments of God are inscrutable – In His limitless mercy, the Lord has arranged things in such a way that it has been given to us, with all our sins and vices, with all our weaknesses and passions, to venerate His Nativity, His Resurrection, and even to unite with Him in the most intimate way through reception of His Body and Blood. Think for a moment about how enormous and limitless our gratitude to God should be for this! Even if we should dedicate the entire remaining portion of our lives to the fervent service of God, spending it in fasting and unceasing prayer, it would seem too meager a sacrifice in comparison with the sacrifice which was offered on Golgotha for the sins of all people. We should always remember this and never consider ourselves worthy of communing with the Divine and abiding within the confines of the Church of Christ which receives us with the loving care of a parent even with all of our vices.

We meet the present feast alarmed by thoughts about our brothers who once dwelt together with us within the confines of the saving Church, who once communed with us from one chalice, but who are now rushing headlong into the abyss of heresy and of apostasy. Sad tidings have reached us this Nativity Fast from America where the bishops and priests of the Church Abroad once famed for their unassailable Orthodoxy, seem to have decided to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate, which they have begun to refer to as no less than the "Church in Russia". It was not so very long ago that this very Russian Church Abroad helped many of us, the Orthodox in Russia, and in other countries of the world, to open our eyes to the fact that the Moscow Patriarchate is not the true Church of Christ. The God-inspired writings of the great fathers of the Russian Diaspora, whose assembly is now headed by our Father among the Saints Philaret, Metropolitan of New York and Eastern America, a wonderworker, were and remain for us a pure source of the Truth of the Church. And the truth is that, in the twentieth century, a time during which godless atheism raged over the unfortunate land of Russia, the Russian Church was forcibly divided and almost completely destroyed as a result of seventy years of bloody persecutions. During the Second World War, specifically in 1943, in pursuit of his political aims, the bloody tyrant Stalin, who had annihilated millions of people, including the New Martyrs of Russia, took a handful of surviving clergymen – frightened and unwilling – and founded his false church which began to pretend to be the Russian Orthodox Church. The real Russian Church went underground into catacombs, and the persecution waged against her neither ceased nor decreased over the course of the entire Soviet period, in spite of several "thaws" and reforms. And this tragic division was always witnessed to by the Russian Church Abroad, which in its synodal documents confessed spiritual unity with the Catacomb Church, but labeled the Moscow Patriarchate as the "church of evil doers". And as a heretical organization.

The heresy of the Moscow Patriarchate became especially evident to the Orthodox people of the Russian Diaspora when in 1961 it (the MP) joined the World Council of Churches – an organization uniting every conceivable kind of heretic,

and having as its aim the foundation of "one Christian Church", into which would be incorporated all of the ancient and newest heresies and false teachings. Not being content to wait for the establishment of this "universal church", the members of the World Council of Churches began to pray together and even to perform so-called "sacraments" which things are strictly forbidden by the holy Apostles and the Ecumenical Councils. Thus, the "Orthodox" members of the World Council of Churches, including the Moscow Patriarchate, clearly severed their ties to the holy Apostles and the Ecumenical Councils, and thereby to Orthodoxy. This is exactly what was thought by the Russian Church Abroad, which in 1983, on the initiative of St. Philaret, anathematized ecumenism, i.e., gave over to ecclesiastical condemnation and excommunication all who took part in the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement. To this day the Moscow Patriarchate remains a member of the World Council of Churches, and some of her hierarchs and priests make up the leadership of that heretical organization. And the present day Church Abroad – more correctly that part of her which is headed by Metropolitan Laurus – without formally abrogating the anathema against ecumenism, has announced its approaching unification with the ecumenists. Is this not a classic example of what is called in the Order of the Mystery of Confession "falling under one's own anathema". In their blindness, the leaders of the Church Abroad "didn't notice" that at the same time that their delegation was meeting in Moscow, an ecumenical "theological conference" was also being held which had been opened by the patriarch. Similarly, the leaders of the Church Abroad are now ready to "swallow" any apostasy of the Moscow Patriarchate. And this means that despite the hopes of the "zealots" within the Moscow Patriarchate itself, after uniting with her, the hierarchs of the Church Abroad will become some of the most submissive and silent, in relation to betrayals of Orthodoxy.

For more than seventy years the Russian Church Abroad was the custodian of the true repository of the Orthodox Faith, and the whole Orthodox world looked up to her with respect and hope. How sad she appears now after her rejection of her great inheritance, in her role as a humiliated petitioner for mercy from the Moscow Patriarchate. It makes your heart bleed when you look upon such an "abomination of desolation,... standing in the holy place" (Mt. 24:15). Indeed, the fall of the Church Abroad is a phenomenon more tragic, and – I would say – apocalyptic, than the fall of the Moscow Patriarchate, which from its inception in 1943, was "conceived in iniquities" and "born in sins". The Russian Church Abroad, for almost all of the twentieth century, shone like a torch of Orthodoxy, and for this reason the satanic crime which her present day "blind leaders" are committing is frightening and unforgivable. Metropolitan Laurus, Archbishop Mark, Archbishop Hilarion, Bishop Kirill – having kissed the hand of the imposter-patriarch Alexis – give the impression of people who have lost their sight, hearing, and have lost all common sense, not to mention their Orthodox Faith. They have linked themselves to the people who were reproached by the Prophet Jeremiah, when he said: "Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not" (Jer. 5:21).

Hear now, O hierarchs and clergy of the Russian Church Abroad, not our lowly voice, which for a long time now has meant nothing to you, but the trumpet blast of your own fathers. Hear how your first First Hierarch, the blessed Metropolitan Anthony, implored by the Living God the founder of the Moscow Patriarchate, Sergius (Stragorodsky) to follow the path of the New Martyrs and not betray the Church into the hands of the atheists. Read the sacred lines of the spiritual last will and testament of your second First Hierarch, Metropolitan Anastassy, who forbade not only prayerful, but even simple everyday communion with the false church, founded by Stalin. Behold the incorrupt relics of the great zealot of Orthodoxy, St. Metropolitan Philaret, whom you sacrilegiously buried in the crypt of the cathedral church of the monastery in Jordanville! Do you think that you will escape hearing his ominous anathema when you stand before the throne of the King of Heaven where this great God-pleaser stands pouring out bitter tears over your inglorious end?

Look into the eyes of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia – both those who were "glorified" hypocritically by the Moscow Patriarchate without first repenting, and those whom they continue to blaspheme. What do you expect to hear from that "Divine Army", the many millions of Saints "of whom the whole world was not worthy" when you try to justify your treachery? For now you are about to cross the threshold of that same Moscow Patriarchate, for which many bishops, priests and lay people, the salt of the Russian land, because they refused to recognize her, were summarily shot, without any trial or due process. You kiss the cold hand of the successor of that same Sergius who once openly, before the entire world, renounced the New Martyrs and blasphemed them saying that they were political criminals, and that the Church distances itself from them. And this at the same moment when these New Martyrs were witnessing to their fidelity to Christ and His Church by incredible sufferings!

You, the unworthy successor to the former glory of the Russian Church Abroad sing Hosanna and Many Years to the so-called "most holy patriarch" who not only has never uttered a word of repentance for directly collaborating with the KGB (formerly NKVD), but has increased his apostasies since the fall of the Soviet authorities. In 1990, none other than the present leader of the Moscow Patriarchate announced, while speaking before a group of rabbis in New York, that he and the followers of the Talmud have but "one father". But was it not the Lord Himself Who said to the Jews, who rejected Him that their father was the devil? Under Alexis II, the Moscow Patriarchate signed two unions: the Chambesy Union with the Monophysites, and the Balamand Union with the Catholics. This is the same false-Patriarch Alexis who covers over all of the transgressions of the post-Soviet authorities, because of which a large portion of the Russian people continue to suffer.

And finally, you, the church of Metropolitan Laurus, are betraying your own flock in Russia, which trusted you and which now, it seems, is not worthy of being called "the Church in Russia". What will become of this admittedly little flock which consciously chose to depart from the unrighteousness of the Moscow Patriarchate, but has now suddenly found itself to

be unneeded and even a "liability" for its own church leaders? At the Last Judgment, each pastor must give an answer for every soul that has been destroyed by him, for the entire world is not worth even one human soul.

The spiritual essence of what is now taking place with the Russian Church Abroad is clear – it is part of the process of the worldwide apostasy from the Truth which will precede the glorious Second Coming of Christ. The Savior forewarned us about this saying: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the faith on earth?" (Lk. 18:8) Alas, it is already the case in this imperfect world, which reposes in evil, that the "little flock" of true Orthodox Christians is getting smaller and smaller, and it is becoming more and more difficult for us to survive under these conditions of universal apostasy. Nevertheless, besides the spiritual aspect, the process of unification between the Russian Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate has another, purely secular, mercantile side to it. Apparently, this secular concern controls the activities of the hierarchs of the synod of Metropolitan Laurus, which from a spiritual point of view appear completely absurd and unnatural. The secular aspect of this process results in the fact that over the course of the past few years, the Church Abroad has consistently been losing its properties and flocks abroad. This may be explained by the fact that the major portion of Russian emigration is now comprised of people who have emigrated recently from Russia, where they were raised and educated under the Soviet regime. For majority of these people, those ideals which were defended in the past by the Russian Church Abroad, have no meaning, and the Church for them now is simply a "link to the motherland". Besides this, the Moscow Patriarchate is also very actively opening new parishes abroad, and snatching away the properties of the Russian Church Abroad. Thus the leadership of the Church Abroad is compelled to "capitulate" in order not to lose the latter. This means that the underlying stimuli for the "reunification" that is taking place are not spiritual, theological, canonical, or even patriotic ones, but purely economic and financial ones. And this imparts a certain cynicism to the betrayal that is being carried out, and to the self destruction of the Russian Church Abroad.

The fatal mistake of the leadership of the Russian Church Abroad was made in 1994, when it actually pushed away its faithful children in Russia who were then joining her in droves. After the fall of the Soviet regime, the future of the Russian Church Abroad was only in Russia whither she was to have returned the unspoiled repository of Orthodoxy which she had been keeping. And the process of this return had already been begun – in just a few short years there appeared hundreds of Orthodox parishes and communities which had renounced the heretical Moscow Patriarchate and had joined to the Russian Church Abroad. Such development of events, threatening the Moscow Patriarchate itself with ruin, frightened many of those in power – both in the church and in the government. With the help of various provocations and slanders, the seeds of mistrust between the parts of the Church in Russian homeland and abroad were sown, and soon afterward, the Church Abroad set out on the course of compromise and rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate, which had never been an acceptable possibility for the part of the Church in the Russian Homeland from the beginning. But in any case, the Russian Church Abroad did manage to return the repository of unspoiled Orthodoxy to the Russian homeland, even if only at the last moment. Canonical episcopal consecrations were performed, and the living bearer of the great tradition of the Russian Church Abroad – the ever-memorable Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) – not long before his repose, bound to the wheelchair, visited Suzdal, where he blessed the path of the Russian Autonomous Church. Thus, the thread of succession, stretching from Apostolic times, through the pre-revolutionary Russian Church, through the Church of the New Martyrs and Russian Church Abroad, was transferred to us. The repository was returned to the homeland, and the historical mission of the Russian Church Abroad was exhausted.

Many of the great Churches of the past fell away into heresy or ceased to exist. Before the end of time, only the Universal Church of Christ will survive, but independent Local Churches can come and go. Now that the Russian Church Abroad has fallen from Orthodoxy, an especially providential mission has been placed upon us, dear hierarchs, fathers, brothers and sisters. We should do everything possible and everything that is not possible, in order to preserve the true Orthodox Faith without any distortions, modernization and false interpretations. And if it is ordained that the Russia should experience a renaissance, than this will only happen on the foundation of true Orthodoxy which our Church confesses and preaches. However, our preaching should not be confined by the traditional territorial borders of the Russian Church. Now, when the official local churches have fallen away from Orthodoxy, our preaching should resound across the entire world, "from the rising of the sun to the setting thereof". And we note with joy the increasing numbers of our flocks abroad – in places like America, Western Europe, Bulgaria, Korea, etc. We should be prepared for the task that the Lord has assigned to our Church in particular – to continue the service of the Russian Church Abroad, even beyond the borders of our homeland.

I call upon you, beloved brethren and children, to increase your prayers for the salvation of all the true Orthodox believers, who for one reason or another continue to remain aboard the sinking ship that of the Russian Church Abroad. It is necessary to serve special molebens to ask God's help for those people in their imminent search for the path which leads to the true Church. May the Lord enlighten our brothers abroad so that we might one day again, with one mouth and with one heart, glorify Christ the Savior with the words the angelic doxology of the feast of the Nativity: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men".

Beloved in the Lord children of the Church of Christ!

Once again, I sincerely and heartily greet you with the light-bearing and saving feast of the Nativity of Christ! With all my soul, I wish all of you good health, the salvation of your souls, perseverance and courage, and also spiritual discretion, which is the mother of all virtues!

With enormous love and care for your salvation

+ Lowly VALENTIN, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir.  
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church

**It is frightening even to think what fury from the enemies of the True Orthodox Church this manly and confessing Epistle of the First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church will provoke!**

**APPEAL OF THE FIRST HIERARCH OF THE AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH  
METROPOLITAN VALENTIN  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE ROCOR(L) AND THE ROC (MP)  
IN MOSCOW BETWEEN NOVEMBER 17-21, 2003**

Beloved in Christ Venerable Archpastors,  
Pastors, Monks and Nuns, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, our Savior!

The most precious thing for us in this life, undoubtedly, is our soul, which is not worth even the entire world with of its joys. Eternal life with God or eternal death – this is the end of our earthly sojourn. The path of sorrows and persecutions for the name of Christ is exactly what the Lord Himself promised to his little flock. Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth away to destruction, and many are they who enter through it.

Over the course of several days, we have all been witnesses of the meeting between the representatives of the Church Abroad and the leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate. This event has taken place not by accident, but is the result of a long preparation. It cannot fail to evoke sorrow in the hearts of true Orthodox Christians. For many, it has become evident that the leadership of the Church Abroad went to the negotiations with the ROC MP, having been attracted to them by the idea of a political unification. They did not know what the MP was from *within*; they did not know what we, the faithful in Russia know. We know what it is that hides there behind the showy façade of their “religious revival” and golden cupolas.

It is naïve to think that the time of the totalitarian atheistic regime has passed into history and that everything has changed. An evil tree does not bring forth good fruit; and repentance, even if it has taken place in great secrecy between the ROCOR(L) and the MP, has not washed away sins. The sin of sergianism, the sin of the heresy of ecumenism, the sin of betrayal of the truth, the sin of corruption and hypocrisy, have not disappeared! In order to be convinced of it, it is enough to remember the entire Soviet itinerary, worked out by the atheists, by which the Moscow Patriarchate unswervingly and pompously marched along with her hierarchy.

From the writings of the holy Fathers it is known that pious lay people, elders, zealous pastors and teachers, priests and missionaries do not by themselves make up the Church, which, according to the words of St. Cyprian of Carthage, is found in the Orthodox episcopacy: “Where the bishop is, there is the Church”. No matter how many lay people enter the MP, they can never turn her into the Church of Christ, for: “as is the episcopacy, so is the Church”.

At the present time, the collective confession of the entire episcopacy of the ROC MP *must not be recognized as Orthodox*, because not one of the ROC MP’s unions with the heretics (Balamand and Chambesy) has been condemned by them. Prayers with the heterodox continue even until now. The MP takes part in all ecumenical projects, and the hierarchy of the MP continue to conduct blasphemous “divine services”. The fidelity of the MP to the ecumenical movement was confirmed by the 1994, 1997, and 2000 full Councils of the Synod of Bishops. It is superfluous to say that the Moscow Patriarchate does not know, nor ever has, condemned Ecumenism or Sergianism.

During the past few days, and in front of the whole world, at the same time as they were receiving the delegation of the Church Abroad, the MP hosted an ecumenical conference, laughing in the face of those who are still hoping for the repentance of the MP.

The entire world was witness to the hierarchs of the ROCOR praying together with Alexis II and with members of his Synod. Having concluded an ecumenical prayer with unrepentant heretics, the ROCOR has shown itself to be in violation of the Apostolic and Conciliar Canons, but even of its own anathema against the heresy of Ecumenism, which had been promulgated by the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR in 1983. At that time, the Church Abroad stood for keeping and defending the true teaching of the Faith. At that time, the choice of the ROCOR was a ray “of light of the Truth” in the windowless darkness of ecumenists’ lies, in which almost all the nations of the world are drowning. Now, however, the hierarchs of the ROCOR are asking forgiveness for having done so from the main violators of the canons of the Apostles and the Holy Fathers – the MP! Today we seen the disgraceful end of the ROCOR, once presaged by the ever-memorable Bishop Gregory (Grabbe).

We call upon all who are zealous for the purity of Orthodoxy to strengthen their prayers for the enlightenment of the errant and for their return to the path of the Truth. Today, the MP is uniting with the ROCOR, tomorrow it will be with the Vatican, as already has been done by the Ecumenical Patriarchs Athenagoras, Demetrios and Bartholomew. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment, than it will be for them.

+ Humble Valentin, Metropolitan of Suzdal and Vladimir  
First Hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church

**AN ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (Laurus)  
By Bishop Gregory of Denver and Colorado**

I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, asking that His mercy be with you. In the spirit of love, I am writing to you this time of crisis, hoping that you will receive my words in the same spirit.

As you know, in this coming month, the ROCOR bishops under Metropolitan Laurus are meeting to discuss the future "reunification" of the Russian Church (as if the Russian Church has been divided). This is a time when a final decision has to be made by the God-loving faithful and clergy of the ROCOR who wish to uphold the Orthodox traditions of the glorious First Hierarchs Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy and Philaret. I hope and pray that you, my friends in the ROCOR, will not be deceived.

The ROCOR bishops and many of the clergy are attempting to cleverly mislead the faithful to follow them into a tragic and destructive sin. They are telling you that the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) has repented and met all of their requirements to accomplish the "reunification" of the Russian Church. Archbishop Mark has openly worked for this union for over a decade, and now in his recent interview with "Nezavisimaya Gazeta/religii", has said that there is no obstacle in the way of union, yet this union itself will be an obstacle to your salvation if you follow him and Metropolitan Laurus. The MP has not repented, and I believe cannot repent of its irreversible course. They do not believe in repentance; otherwise they would have done so long ago. This is the institution, not founded by God but founded by Stalin; therefore, it is rightly called "the Soviet Church". The true Orthodox Church of Russia, because of the persecutions of the godless government, was forced into the Catacombs and Abroad. What remained visible in Russia throughout these decades is the present-day MP, headed by bishops who are communists. Has anything changed? Do not be deceived if they tell you: "yes". This is a lie.

This is the same MP that has persecuted the New Confessors of Russia and caused their martyrdoms. This is the same MP that fell under anathema of St. Patriarch Tikhon and All-Russian Council of 1917-1918. This is the same MP that was anathematized by the Russian Catacomb Church, whose New Martyrs, e.g. Archbishop of Ufa said: "All followers of the lying Metropolitan Sergius are themselves filled with lies and evil and have fallen away from the truth of Christ, they have fallen away from Christ's Church" ("The life and Work of Archbishop Andrew", M. Zelenogorsky, p. 216).

This is the same MP about which Metropolitan Anthony and the whole ROCOR episcopate declared: "Metropolitans Sergius and Eulogius... have now fallen away from the saving unity of the Church and have joined themselves to the enemies of Christ and the whole Church" ("Open Epistle" signed by all bishops; July 28<sup>th</sup> O. S., 1928, # 892). This is the same MP, which is now headed by the communist Patriarch Alexis II (KGB code-name: "Drozdov"). Let no one deceive you to think that he leads the MP in confessing the truth of Orthodoxy. As if the heresy of Sergianism was not enough, they have also become the leaders of the heresy of Ecumenism. They will never change course and break communion with all the heretical pseudo-Orthodox Patriarchs of "World Orthodoxy" as did St. Metropolitan Philaret. You should bear in mind the holy words of St. Theodore the Studite, who said that "not only heretics, but also those who have communion with them, are enemies of God". (Epistle to Abbot Theophilus).

This is the same MP that has persecuted and has caused misery and hardship to millions in Russia and continues to do so to this very day. Our Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church (AROC) has suffered over 75 acts of arson, vandalism, beatings, and other kinds of violence within two past years. The MP cannot tolerate the fact that 400 churches have united under Metropolitan Valentine, about 200 of them from the Catacombniks. Therefore, they have slandered and fabricated false charges and trials against our Metropolitan Valentin to the end that they may destroy the Church by imprisoning him and even causing his death. We know this is instigated by the MP because the Prosecutor openly declared to Metropolitan Valentine before many witnesses that, if he would return to the MP, all charges would be dropped and cases dismissed.

The time has come for the followers of Metropolitan Laurus to make a crucial decision: 1) to be in communion with false shepherds and enemies of Christ, or 2) to search and seek true shepherds of the Russian Church. In my mind, and I believe, in the eyes of God also, there is only one answer – AROC, where God has preserved a Synod of 13 canonical and right-believing hierarchs. Our Savior, in His providence, has kept for Himself a remnant of confessing bishops. This cannot be said of Metropolitan Laurus and his Synod who are about to commit another betrayal. This cannot be said about Metropolitan Vitaly, who in all honesty, is the cause of the ruin of the ROCA and admits it, in that he now declares heretical all the wrong actions in which he himself participated in the past. He has also started a new Synod on a foundation of canonical disorder. When it comes to the Faith, there is no allowance for a Bishop to make an error. Orthodoxy must be maintained, in all its purity, at all times.

The true confession of faith of the much suffering Russian Church is maintained only by the Synod of Metropolitan Valentine, which is the true offspring of the confessing Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and which will always continue to condemn Sergianism, Ecumenism, Modernism, Masonry, and other demonic inventions, which are opposed to Christ. You should know that Metropolitan Valentin, myself and all the other hierarchs of the Russian Church are willing to help you in every way we can. All your spiritual needs will be met by uniting yourself to those who love and sacrifice themselves for Christ. We will suffer with you, if need be, and as good shepherds of Christ, we will not deny you or betray you. May God help you to follow His will in this matter.

I pray for your good guidance, and remain your friend in Christ,

+ Bishop Gregory of Denver and Colorado (Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church)

## KALEIDOSCOPE OF CHURCH EVENTS

When immediately after the Council of Bishops of 2000 "Church News" sounded the alarm, when it found out from the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Gabriel, and Bishop Barnabas of Cannes, that "we have erased the difference between the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate" – we received reproaches of groundless panic and pessimism. Today, what we warned about nearly three years ago has become a sad reality: a quite official delegation of the hierarchs of ROCOR, headed by Archbishop Mark (Arndt) on November 5/18 met with the most odious of the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate – Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk (Goondiayev) with the KGB code name "Mikhailov". Besides the

"business meetings" the delegation stayed a few days more in order to visit the most important churches and monasteries and returned to the USA on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

The members of the delegation of hierarchical rank were: Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Archbishop Hilarion of Sydney and Australia-New Zealand and Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America.

The rumors about this trip and the fulfillment of it by this delegation created and immediate unrest among the clergy and lay people of the ROCOR. In the Internet there appeared letters, addressed to all the hierarchs of the Synod headed by Metropolitan Laurus, from Bishop Daniel of Erie, a letter signed by 14 priests, a letter of Oleg Rodzianko and number of other people concerned about the negotiations with the Moscow Patriarchate, that they have gone too far. At the same time, in connection with this open and tragic betrayal of the principles and traditions of the paths of the Church Abroad, there were published numerous letters, declarations from and interviews with clergy and lay people. We feel it proper to publish some of them.

To start with, we publish the announcement made by the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel, which was published by Vertograd Internet agency # 396 on November 15, 2003. It reports that according to the opinion of the Secretary of the Synod of Bishops, Bishop Gabriel, expressed at the Orthodox Conference of the Southern states of the USA on November 9, the "Moscow Patriarchate has to completely [?!] renounce Ecumenism and Sergianism, and only after that may one examine the matter of uniting with her". Bishop Gabriel reminded all that the Synod of Bishops anathematized Ecumenism and this anathema is still valid. He stressed that the members of ROCOR (L) may concelebrate only with those Orthodox Churches with which there is an established liturgical communion: that is the Greek Orthodox Synod of Metropolitan Cyprianos (who believes that since no Ecumenical Council has condemned the new calendarists – they may receive the sacraments in the Orthodox Church, although there is not a single new calendar Orthodox "Church" which is not at the same time ecumenical, Ch.N.). The ROCOR Synod (L) also has prayerful relations with the Romanian Old Calendar Church and True Orthodox Church of Bulgaria". Bishop Gabriel stressed that the ROCOR (L) Church has special relations with the Jerusalem Patriarchate and ROCOR clergy may concelebrate with the clergy of Jerusalem Patriarchate in the Holy Sepulcher Church only: in any other places such concelebrations are forbidden". Unfortunately, the Jerusalem Patriarchate concelebrates with any one, and in particular, with the Moscow Patriarchate.

From reports about this conference, the speech of Bishop Gabriel created a controversial reaction. The supporters of unity with the MP saw in it contradictions with declarations previously made by some hierarchs as well as with the resolution of the pastoral Conference by the Australian Diocese, while the opponents of unity have decided that this 'eclaration offered some hope!

But actually – the speech of Bishop Gabriel is at best the result of a typical naiveté and nothing else. If the MP had wanted to renounce Sergianism and Ecumenism she could have done so at least 10 years ago! Her hierarchy has nearly 160 bishops, while that of the ROCOR only 13 and 4 of them are invalids. The remaining 8 more or less younger bishops, with very few exceptions, for this or that reason, are convinced supporters of the Moscow Patriarchate.

As we mentioned above, our prognosis made in 2000 has proved to come true within three years. Now we permit ourselves to make a prognosis for a much shorter time.

As the result of treacherous activities of the ROCOR (L) episcopate, the ROCOR has formally rejected the paths of her former First Hierarchs, Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy and Philaret.

Archbishop Mark, as well as some hierarchs and clergy, have said over and over again to their flock that there could not even be talk about an immediate unification with the MP, but also they qualified this by saying that this unification is possible in the future "in phases!" Below we publish the text of the Epistle of the ROCOR (L) and from reading it, it is quite obvious that the **first phase** has already occurred at the latest Council of Bishops, which decreed that it is possible to negotiate on "how to overcome the obsolete or possible new misunderstandings". We can expect that in about two years the final unification will take place.

## EPISTLE TO THE FLOCK FROM THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS TO THE ROCOR held in December 2003 in New York

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit!

The Council of Bishops having gathered at this time, as had preceding Councils, under the auspices of the Holy-Miracle-working Kursk-Root icon of Mother of God, has as its main task the matter of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church/Moscow Patriarchate.

The session was preceded by an All-Diaspora Expanded Pastoral Conference. The bishops who were present at the Conference were able to hear the full scope of opinions from practically the entire clergy of the Church Abroad. It can be decisively stated that not one person doubts the necessity of having dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate towards overcoming existing divisions. A significant portion of the participants once again raised the matter of condemning Sergianism and Ecumenism. Without a doubt, this resounded in the work of the Council and will be taken into account [in] going forward.

Before us stands the question not of merging or uniting churches, but the establishment of normal church relations between two parts of the once-whole Russian Church, parts of which found themselves separated for historical [!?] reasons. (Emphasis by "Ch. N.")

As is well known, the Russian Church Abroad was established on temporary principles in the 1920's in accordance with a Ukase of Patriarch Tikhon. It was assumed that the communist state would fall in a few years, and that Russian émigrés, headed by their archpastors, could return to their homeland.

Unfortunately, because of our sinfulness, this did not occur! The godless regime enslaved the Russian people for over 70 years and inflicted brutal persecution upon faith in Christ.

Currently, over the years of its wanderings, the Church Abroad spread to almost all countries of the world. New dioceses were formed, churches were built with parish schools, monasteries were established, youth and patriotic groups were formed, newspapers were published along with journals and books. The goal for the pastors of the Church Abroad became not only preserve of the Orthodox faith and Russian culture, but to attract those of other faiths to Orthodoxy, instilling in them our Church traditions. And so, in many countries, parishes were born consisting almost exclusively of the local population which converted to Orthodoxy. Over the years, even the composition of the parishioners changed. While the older generation passed to another world, their children and grandchildren began to forget the Russian language and lost the cultural legacy of their parents. Mixed marriages became a common occurrence. These factors presented a new challenge for the Church Abroad, which her founders did not foresee, to wit, that the Russian Orthodox Church must proselytize and bring the world to light of Orthodoxy.

We Russians who find ourselves abroad, must thank God that, being in complete freedom from godless communism, our Church was able to preserve the purity of the Orthodox faith, and not submit to the fatal temptations of ecumenism and modernism.

At the same time, in our much-suffering homeland, the godless state employed brutal terror and every means possible to enslave the Russian Church. Fortunately, this has come to an end! As our saints foretold, God showed mercy to the Russian People and freed them from the yoke of the godless state. May the earth be glad and the heavens rejoice: "Babylon the great is fallen and is fallen the great harlot" (Rev. 18:2)

One can argue endlessly on the ambiguity of socio-political shifts in Russia, but the change in the situation of millions of the faithful is apparent to all.

Now we have become witnesses to that relentless spiritual renewal occurring in our Homeland: hundreds of thousands of Russian people are being baptized, churches and monasteries are being built, theological academies, seminaries and parish schools are opening, religious books are being published in enormous numbers!

We, living abroad, must rejoice at the spiritual awakening of the Russian people, and thank God that He heard our prayers and the prayers of the host of New Martyrs of Russia for the salvation of Russia.

Maybe it will not be as rapid as one would like, but the Church in Russia is gradually recognizing the need for destroying the wall that has thus far divided the Russian flock in the Homeland and that abroad. Indeed, the Church in Russia glorified the host of the New Martyrs, as well as the Royal Family, which was unimaginable under the godless regime. It also condemned the principle of the Church serving the interest of the state in essence, the principle of Sergianism. A great number of clergymen and laypersons in Russia insist upon the withdrawal of the Russian Church from the World Council of Churches. This all gives hope that with time the other wounds inflicted upon the Russian Church by the militantly atheist regime will be healed.

Now we must agree upon how to overcome the **obsolete** and possible misunderstandings between both parts of the Russian Church, and to agree upon how to resolve all future problems of interrelations peacefully and in the spirit of truth and love.

It is our firm conviction that the Church Abroad, in light of the tasks which stood before her in regard to the nourishment of such a scattered and disparate flock, must preserve her freedom and administrative independence. At the same time, it is desirable, in those places where the parishes of the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate exist side by side, to work out a plan of friendly coexistence in the fulfillment of the single mission of witnessing Christ. The matter of full eucharistic communion [is there a partial one?] may be only a final result of the conciliar actions of both parts of the Russian Church, to be prepared by the corresponding committees.

For the resolution of problems related to overcoming confrontations between the two parts of the Russian Church, the Council of Bishops formed a committee which will exhaustively examine questions of relations between two parts of the Russian Church and will offer measures acceptable to both sides.

Recognizing the importance and responsibility of the developing process of negotiations, we find it desirable to convene in the future a Fourth All-Diaspora Council.

We invoke God's blessing upon our entire flock and ask for their holy prayers for us, your archpastors, who wish to preserve our flock in unity and purity of Orthodox faith.

Most Holy Mother of God, our Guide, continue to lead us according to the commandments of Your Son and the Holy Fathers who pleased Him. Amen.

Signed by: the First Hierarch of the ROCOR **Metropolitan Laurus**, Archbishop Alipy of Chicago and Detroit, Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain, Archbishop Hilarion of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand, archbishops Kyrill of San Francisco and Western America, Bishop Ambroise of Geneva and Western Europe. Bishop Yevtikhi of Ishima and Siberia, Bishop Agathangel of Simferopol and Crimea, Bishop Daniel, Bishop Gabriel of Manhattan, Bishop Alexander of Buenos Aires and South America, Bishop Michael of Boston, Bishop Agapit of Stuttgart, Bishop Peter of Cleveland.

It is very characteristic, that neither the resolution of the Expanded All-Diaspora Pastoral Conference, nor the Epistle of the Council of the ROCOR Bishops **mentions the existence in Russia of the Catacomb Church even with one word!** And yet, the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church alone has more than 200 catacomb communities and parishes. There are some also in the jurisdiction of Archbishop Lazarus. However, the main traitor of the principles of the ROCOR, Archbishop Mark -- long ago proclaimed, that the Catacomb Church in Russia has perished in 1940's and no later than 1950!

## RESPONSE BY THE COUNCIL OF ROCOR BISHOPS TO HIS HOLINESS PATRIARCH ALEXIS

Your Holiness!

Your letter addressed to the Council of Bishops was not the first step which expressed your positive attitude toward the proper normalization of the relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad.

We accept with gratitude the warm welcome given our delegation, which visited Moscow in November of this past year. We thank you also for sending the three educated and good-willed pastors to the All-Diaspora Pastoral Conference held in the suburbs of New York, who related a great deal of important information on the situation of the Church in Russia in the past and present.

We hope that these clergymen were able to report to you the spirit of freedom which is dear to us in which our pastors were bred and which infused our pastoral conference, headed by twelve bishops of the Church Abroad. We think that they may also attested to the fact, along with the wide scope of opinions on our relationship, the absolute majority of pastors admit the vital need to continue the dialogue already begun. (Underlined by "Ch. N").

Your combination of cautious action with the earnest effort to overcome confrontation in the spirit of brotherly, mutual understanding and Christian love serves as an example for us. We thank you for your previous care in seeing that previous obstacles and misunderstandings are set aside, in order to open new paths of relations between the Russian Orthodox people wherever they may be, for the people have truly been scattered across the face of the earth. This scattering has occurred in different periods of time and in the most varying of circumstances, which leads to differences in mindset even in our day. But the Church is strong in the love of Christ to embrace all.

We -- Russian Orthodox bishops, the pastors entrusted with our care, the clergymen and the people -- have always felt this power, we lived in it. Now new challenges face us. In the contemporary world, civil borders do not play the same role that they played even in the recent past. The "iron curtain" fell, communication is now possible, and families once divided seemingly, forever -- now have contact with each other. At the same time, wounds are healing which were inflicted decades ago.

The tribulations visited upon the Russian Orthodox people are well known to us. We also saw them firsthand at the All-Diaspora Pastoral Conference, when the most wide-ranging points of view were expressed with frankness and pain. At the same time, those of other nations whom the Lord brought to communion with the Church through providential scattering of the Russian people also participate in this pain from what had occurred. Who will heal us? We rely on the One Merciful Lord.

Indeed, as you expressed in your Epistle, the "external ecclesial garment was torn asunder", yet "the Body of Christ preserved its holy unity". This true ecclesiastical unity, preserved in the depths, must be brought forth by us, for the Body of Christ is the Church, and the Mystery of all mysteries is one -- the Body of Christ. We are given this responsibility: despite all the hindrances we may meet on the path of overcoming divisions, we must open our hearts for the acceptance of God's providence for His Church.

Moreover, at the same time we look to the struggle of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia, who lay down their lives for Christ during the persecution of the Church, not knowing what will come of this chosen path for future generations on this earth, for us today; yet they hoped that they will be heard by the Lord. And they were! That is why their glorification initiated that which at one time seemed impossible in light of countless external obstacles. Now we must fully make sense of this miracle together. We took from your Epistle a readiness to continue upon this path of this miracle of the Church, and, in turn, we attest to our willingness to travel the path shown to us by the Lord, who glorified His saints.

Our Council established a committee for the study of crucial questions alongside a similar committee from your side. We hope that the meeting of our First Hierarch Metropolitan Laurus with your Holiness at the scheduled time will be the next step in the overcoming of the obstacles that arose in the church life of the Orthodox people in recent decades, so that together we might glorify our Lord Jesus Christ "with one mouth and one heart" having "abolished in His flesh the enmity" (Eph. 2:15).

This obsequious letter was signed by all the hierarchs who have signed the above Epistle and is addressed to the Patriarch, who while being in charge of all MP affairs has brutally persecuted a very decent hierarch Hermogen (Golubev), because he disobeyed the government demands and did not permit a single church to close in his diocese, but even managed to build a few new ones.

According to the accurate definition of Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) -- these dialogues consist of negotiations how, by means of compromises, to sell their principles as profitably and unnoticeably as possible.

## IMPUDENT LIE OF ARCHBISHOP MARK

Archbishop Mark of Berlin, Germany and Great Britain gave a lengthy report to the just concluded All-Diaspora Pastoral Conference, for which 12 bishops and about 150 clergymen gathered from various dioceses of ROCOR (L)

The report of 16 pages to a significant degree consisted of many quotations from various minutes of councils (even the Council of 1953) at which there were raised the questions about relations of the ROCOR toward the MP. It is self-evident that Archbishop Mark ignored the last will (testament) of Metropolitan Anastassy and written statements by Metropolitan Philaret, who categorically denied the grace of the Church within the MP.

In this report, he permitted himself in the presence of almost the complete Council of Bishops and some 150 clergymen to make the following false statement: **"And in regard to participation in the World Council of Churches – within the last year ALL the Local Orthodox Churches have refused it, including the Moscow Patriarchate"!**

It is characteristic that it seems **not one of the members of the Pastoral Conference present** found enough courage to face Archbishop Mark and tell him that this blunt lie is a mockery of the level of understanding and knowledge of those present in the hall!

In this same report Archbishop Mark tried to prove that the anathema of the Council of Bishops, proclaimed against the heresy of Ecumenism in 1983, was 'directed exclusively against the errors of the children of our own Church. We could not accept [the anathema] in the sense that it was directed against other Local Churches, although we would hope to influence them by the very fact of the announcement of this anathema. Some members of our Church, not excluding some hierarchs, lately however, have presented the matter as if this was an anathema also against other Churches, while forgetting that we may not take any measures against people who are not found to be in disciplinary submission to our Church".

It seems that Archbishop Mark has "forgotten" that when the Arian heresy (just as with Ecumenism at present) had overwhelmed nearly all the Local Churches, then the First Ecumenical Council ((in 325 AD) pronounced the anathema of all who adhere to the Arian heresy, regardless of "disciplinary (?!) submission"!

## INTERVIEW WITH ARCHPRIEST MICHAEL ARDOV (CLERGYMAN OF THE AROC) AND SOME OTHER INTERVIEWS

This interview, given to the "Portal-Credo.Ru" was entitled: "Huge Pike, the Moscow Patriarchate, Swallows Tiny Carp – the Church Abroad".

*Question:* How do you evaluate the forthcoming meeting of Alexis II with the delegation of the ROCOR (L)?

*Answer:* I can take my turn in offering congratulations to the members of FSB (Federal Security Services), who are the successors of the KGB, which for decades tried to annihilate the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Now, as we see, this finally has been achieved. This is the next step toward having the huge pike of the Moscow Patriarchate swallow a tiny carp – the Church Abroad.

The struggle of KGB against the Church Abroad started in the 20's when Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), as we know, wrote a letter to the Geneva Conference with a request that all nations in the world not help the criminal Bolsheviks kill and annihilate the Russian people. Naturally, his voice was not heard. On the one side the Russian Church Abroad was a successfully anti-communist, despite all kinds of "détentes" or "coexistence" on part of the Western leaders, she was absolutely and directly opposed to the bandits' ideology, and besides, was always faithful to true Orthodoxy. And now, when Communism has sort of crashed – actually not crashed, but as we know, more precisely communism has changed its appearance, so that what is happening now is, as we also realize, "democrats" with hidden Red Party membership cards – it has become clear that to the majority of the flock and the priests anti-communism was more important than truthfulness to Orthodoxy.

The Orthodox Church, when she was led by the genuine Metropolitans – such as Anthony, Anastassy and Philaret – distanced herself from the ecumenist Orthodoxy, coming forward against ecumenism, modernism and similar things, but this happened to be not so important for the majority of her flock and the clergy. Besides, as I see it, there was an extended process to recruit hidden agents who would influence, and open agents, who at last have conquered the Synod of Bishops, and as the chess players say, it is all "a matter of technique".

When it is said that probably Metropolitan Laurus will influence something – he will influence nothing. They have already raised their hands in surrender, and it will be further presented as if there were nothing wrong. The Moscow Patriarchate was always ruled by the KGB, so at present the contemporary administration of the president will have two churches in its pocket: one abroad and another here.

*Question:* Will not this lead to the schism within the Moscow Patriarchate?

*Answer:* I don't think so. The Moscow Patriarchate is an organization without principles; within her there coexist the ecumenists and the conservatives. In this respect, she fully reminds one of the Catholic Church, which unites a variety of elements. For them the most important thing is to commemorate the Patriarch, and whether you are an admirer of Rasputin, Ivan the Terrible or Marshal Zhukov, or on the other hand, you are an ecumenist – this is not important for them. There will never be an important schism among them.

The point is that, first, the most unscrupulous hierarchs and priests, starting with Sergius, went to collaborate with the Bolsheviks, and secondly, starting with in 1943, when all of this was legalized, the Soviet government, in the persons of

representatives [in matters of religion, "Ch. N."] and the KGB-ists, was especially occupied in making selections of the priests and monks promoted to become bishops. It is self-evident that dealing with unscrupulous people is much easier. And several generations were especially brought up in this manner.

Those who were more or less honest, who were sincere Christian believers, could expect at best to be appointed to a village parish. After all, there was an order from the Council for Religious Affairs not to admit to the seminaries either in Moscow or in Odessa boys with good grades (a 4 or a 5), but only with grade 3. This was a selection process and, accordingly, at present the Patriarchate is ruled by those with grade 3".

Another interview was given by Archpriest **Victor Potapov** to the "Gazette" journalist Nadezhda Koverkova, which we publish with certain abbreviations. She asked:

"What can be expected from the negotiations in Moscow? Do you have a feeling that they can realistically lead toward union?"

*Answer.* Events are happening with lightening speed – very few expected it from our episcopate. On the one hand it makes us feel uneasy – the people are in no way ready for such swiftness in the development of events. On the other hand, also a hope – many believe that we have to reinstate [!?] prayerful communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. I hope that our bishops will conclude phased agreements: first prayerful communion and then may one discuss administrative union. Not all at once. The phased rapprochement is better than anything else." (Underlined by "Ch. N.")

It would be interesting to know what grades Archpriest Potapov received in the subjects of dogmatic and canon law if he does not know that prayerful communion is the very last stage in negotiations and agreements between various Orthodox Churches?

*Question:* "Are you not afraid of the schisms within the flock Abroad?"

*Answer.* I believe that not all agree that we should by all means unite. But many people abroad have gotten weary of the state of isolation. 70% of our new parishioners are immigrants from Russia over the last two decades. Besides, tremendous changes have happened in Russia – on the political and spiritual levels. We cannot ignore them. At present, there are favorable conditions for starting a dialogue...."

Archpriest Michael Ardov, who grew up in the USSR, as we see, has quite a different opinion about the "tremendous changes in the political and spiritual levels" in contemporary Russia than does Archpriest Potapov!

Then there were questions about the relations between Archbishop Mark and Metropolitan Kyrill Gondiyev and his possible meeting with Metropolitan Sergius of Voronezh and Borisoglebsk. Archpriest Victor Potapov, in this interview several times names Archbishop Mark as Metropolitan Mark! Maybe he knows something that is a secret from the others? All the ruinous influence of Archbishop Mark upon the affairs of the ROCOR were long, long ago obvious to many.

*Question:* It seems that the hierarchs from Abroad are afraid of Metropolitan Kyrill because of his "real estate initiatives", as they believe, however, they still aim at the uniting with the Moscow Patriarchate. However, sooner or later, the administrative and property matters have to be resolved.

*Answer.* We are concerned with that. I remember well how the Patriarch offered a union on the principle: "two administrations – one chalice". I hope that our hierarchs will very carefully approach the administrative part of the negotiations, that we will retain our administration in all the parishes within the Diaspora, that the parishes will remain under our authority. The matter of transferring our priests should remain with our hierarchs. The real estate matters in the Holy Land are more complicated, since there are many more pilgrims to the Holy Land from Russia than from the West. This has to be taken into consideration and people must have the possibility to pray and serve in the places which remain in our possession.

I hope that we will overcome the psychological problems [is this instead of dogmatic and canonical problems? "Ch. N."] between the people in our Homeland and in Diaspora and all of it will become the Russian heritage. At the same time it is yet not clear how to deal with the churches, which were built abroad by the Moscow Patriarchate during the past 10 to 15 years? Will they remain in the administration of the Moscow Patriarchate? And what in the future will the Church Abroad be called? Will we become a Patriarchate, a diocese, a metropolitanate? These private [?!] matters cannot be immediately resolved. I hope it will be done in phases.

*Question:* How many years you believe this phased rapprochement will take?

*Answer.* It is difficult to make any prediction. Metropolitan Laurus will go to Russia to meet with the Patriarch – then the act will be accepted".

It is worth noticing that for Archpriest Potapov dogmas and canons do not exist – the only matter he is interested in – are material matters and the matters of future administration!

And here is another interview, given by **Archbishop Mark** to Maria Sveshnikova of the "Obozrevatel Strana.Ru".

*Question:* Your Eminence, is this your first time coming to Russia?

*Answer.* No, I was in Russia previously. But our delegation comes for the first time for an official visit at such a level.

*Question:* Can you relate to us what will be your schedule?

*Answer:* I have no secrets, just hope that I will have a chance to sleep. A meeting with Patriarch Alexis II is planned, and one more meeting with some members of the Holy Synod.

*Question:* What kind of matters do you plan to discuss during these meetings?

*Answer:* We have come in order to study the present situation of the Russian Church in general, in order to make an attempt at a common discussion about the matters that separate us. And in this way, to come to the conclusion whether there are grounds for both parts of the Russian Church to begin the process of rapprochement toward each other. Because we are two parts of the one Russian Church.

*Question:* At the same time there will be an international theological conference in session about "The Orthodox Teaching about the Church". Will you participate in it?

*Answer:* No, since we didn't know about it. We found out about it only later. Maybe we will drop in for a moment, but in general, we have no intention and we even do not have an official invitation. Thus, the both events will be practically running parallel.

*Question:* As is known, Vladimir Putin during his last visit to New York, invited the Head of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Metropolitan Laurus to come to Moscow. Does it mean that your visit is a replacement for the visit of the head of ROCOR? Or are these two different meetings?

*Answer:* No, we have come in order to establish the conditions under which our First Hierarchy can come. [?! underlined by "Ch. N."]

*Question:* In other words, you say that the visit of Metropolitan Laurus to Moscow is quite a realistic possibility?

*Answer:* Quite realistic. He has accepted the invitation to come in January. But we want to previously clarify, what kind of perspectives there can be for such a visit. And after our visit, we will discuss this possibility in our own circles.

*Question:* So, from your point of view, at present there are favorable conditions for an inter-church dialogue?

*Answer:* One may say it is more favorable than a few years ago. Namely, that is what made us accept the invitation.

*Question:* Can you say what matters of disagreement remain today between the two branches of the Orthodox Church?

*Answer:* The obstacles we still see are the matter of participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the ecumenical movement, and in particular in the World Council of Churches. And the matter of the condemnation of, or more precisely, disassociation from Sergianism".

In an interview in Nizhny Novgorod, given on November 21, Archbishop Mark said: "During the last days we have discussed the matters which could disturb the process of rapprochement, and which are necessary to clear up in order to improve relations. Not on an actual commission by the Church Abroad, but driven by our inner personal feelings we have asked pardon for those extremes, severities and exaggerations which have appeared in verbal form regarding our fellow brothers in Russia. And also the representative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Kyrill in his turn has asked pardon and said that we can move forward only if we are ready ourselves to forgive each other in a Christian manner.

A number of the Internet and newspaper publications in Russia have with a great joy informed their readers about this mutual asking of forgiveness. In particular, the "Mir religii/sobytiya" (The World of Religions/Events) on November 18 has reported that the meeting of the ROCOR delegation with the Moscow Patriarchate "**was going on in a strictly confidential circumstances!**"

Several excellent letters addressed to the ROCOR hierarchy were written by Bishop Daniel of Erie, Bishop Gregory of Denver and Colorado (under the First Hierarchy of the AROC, Metropolitan Valentin), a group letter by the parishioners of the Synod cathedral, as well as by G. Schidlovsky (the president of the Fund for Assistance to the ROCOR) and, especially, Hieromonk Andrew Zalizetsky, Fr. Steven Sabelnik and others.

Vertograd Internet agency in issue # 399 of November 18<sup>th</sup> has already reported that the Moscow Patriarchate is "satisfied" with the meetings, which was secret enough, so that the Secretary of the MP Foreign Relations Department, Archpriest Nicholas Balashov has flatly refused to comment on the first part of the meeting! "The main problem at present is to create a new climate of the relationship, which is favorable for rapprochement of the Church Abroad and the Church in the Homeland" he said.

Another Internet agency, "Portal Credo.Ru", has reported on an interview given by **Archpriest Peter Holodny**, the Treasurer of the Synod of Bishops (who in Moscow financial circles enjoys so little respect that he is simply called "Petka Holodnyi").

He has stated that "The members of the delegation are very happy with the results of negotiations" and that they have proceeded "in the spirit of love and mutual brotherly understanding". (Underlined by "Ch. N.").

Holodny also reported that during the meeting, both parties agreed upon the establishment of special committees in order to solve the specific problems which hinder the rapprochement. According to him: "There is no secret that there do exist theological as well as every day problems". After evaluation of the various interviews it is obvious that the main issues are not theological obstacles, but namely "every day" ones – purely materialistic. These are the main ones, which interest the Moscow Patriarchate in all their negotiations: be it with Catholics, Uniates, the Estonian government or others.

He also said that the committees will study the participation of the MP in the ecumenical movement, the relationship of the Church with the government (in other words: with the KGB, or current FSB - Federal Security Services) the **painful real estate matters** and the so-called "suspended priests" who have left MP for the Church Abroad and vice versa!

In the interview given by Archbishop Mark to the "Gazetta.Ru" after the completion of the meetings of his delegation -- here again we hear of discussions about the property of the Church Abroad!

## AN UNEQUAL MARRIAGE

By Konstantin Preobrazhensky

The unification of the Russian Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) with the Moscow Patriarchate is a matter of hot discussion by the Russian Orthodox believers all over the world. President Putin personally facilitates it. The Council of Bishops of ROCOR, which was held in December 2003 in New York, decided to preserve its current independence, but still called for further discussion about unification with the MP in the future.

This process poses a lot of questions. Why, for example, should ROCOR give her church buildings to be the property of the Russian state, if the Church is separated from the state in Russia?

The answer is clear: because Russian real estate abroad is a source of illegal income for the corrupt Kremlin bureaucrats. According to the Russian newspaper "Novaya Gazeta", the properties of the Russian state outside Russia are fourteen times larger than that of the Vatican. But the Russian state gets only a few crumbs of rental payments. The police can't do anything, because Russian real estate abroad is managed by the Presidential Management Department, which is above the law. ROCOR could provide them with several Vaticans.

Putin himself used to be the supervisor of this, mostly corrupt sphere of activities of the Presidential Management Department, when he was its Deputy Head. "Putin's supervising didn't bring order there" -- stated the newspaper "Novaya Gazeta". Putin still seems to have some connections with it.

The future is scary. As soon as the churches of ROCOR become the Kremlin's property, unceremonious inspection groups from the Presidential Management Department will rush in. Their priests will bitterly feel themselves outcasts. And the KGB officers will come as well. They will study the lists of parish members in order to recruit them.

It is obvious that the Kremlin puts Russian emigrants under its control. In Moscow, the Soviet-style Society of Friendship with Foreign Compatriots has been revived. Initially the KGB managed it. And Russian intelligence has stepped up the recruitment of emigrants. Recently it has come up with the following method of recruiting Russian businessmen abroad.

The officer of the SVR, the Foreign Intelligence Service, approaches a Russian businessman and asks him to become a spy. Of course, he gets a refusal. But then the officer says with a sarcastic smile: "But what if we order Interpol to investigate your background? What if we slander you and say that you are from the Russian mafia? What will happen to your business then?" And the unhappy businessman surrenders! He already knows, how ruthlessly his colleagues are executed in Russia, and that Putin actually utilizes Interpol to fight his political enemies.

Russian emigrants are Putin's headache. They number many millions today. It is a sort of one more Russian state, which is entirely out of the Kremlin's control. And what if they start criticizing Russia, which provides more and more reasons for doing so?

The ROCOR ministers to Russian emigrants. It may also return to a denunciation of falsehood and evil in Russia, as it used to in Soviet times. Its voice will become the voice of Christian conscience.

That is why it must be put under the Kremlin's control as soon as possible. Or be repudiated, which is much better. It is not hard to do. The KGB has got a lot of experience, after taming the MP.

All the contacts with it before 1991 actually were contacts with the KGB. It conducted all the negotiations with ROCOR. All the bishops and most of the priests of the MP were KGB collaborators. They hardly even concealed it, considering the work for KGB to be only one allowed form of cooperation with the state.

Nothing has changed there. The bishops are the same, and their dossiers of secret collaborators are still kept in the KGB safes. Their KGB supervisors moved into the government, the presidential office and have become the ruling elite of Russia.

The positions of both Churches in negotiations are undoubtedly unequal. All the institutions of the Russian state back the MP, including the intelligence agencies. It is acting here, among us. It may bribe, compromise or kill anybody. The bishops of ROCOR have no such a weapon. And they themselves differ from their Russian colleagues. They are much milder and naïve, because they didn't pass through the severe school of surviving in a totalitarian state.

Meeting Putin in New York in October 2003, they proposed to him the establishment in Russia of a Day of Memory for victims of anti-religious terror. Putin evaded giving an answer and concealed the fact that such day has already been established. It is the day of Memory for the Victims of Political Repression, observed on October 30<sup>th</sup>. But now there is silence about it. Meetings are forbidden. Putin dislikes this day.

During his recent visit to Solovetsky Monastery, Putin didn't say a word about the mammoth prison camp there in Stalin's time. Thousands of Russian Orthodox priests and laymen perished there.

The talks about Stalin's mass repressions are considered untimely and antipatriotic in Putin's Russia. The facts about them has been deleted from school books. And now repressions have already begun.

The relics of the white Russian Movement are preserved in many churches of the ROCOR. The reverential attitude toward them will vanish as soon as ROCOR joins the MP. Russia still silently supports the Reds. The title of Hero of the Civil War is given only to them.

Many of the characteristics of Soviet power, which the ROCOR hated so much, are revived in today's Russia: from Stalin's anthem to military studies at schools. The independent media is being destroyed; the state puts private business under its control.

The MP actively cooperates with the authorities and supports them in everything. There is no mention of neutrality. ROCOR will fail to keep its traditional independence from state power. Putin's bureaucrats would not allow it. The fate of the MP awaits the ROCOR.

The beautiful atmosphere of pre-revolutionary Russia has been miraculously preserved in the churches of the ROCOR. I was much surprised by it at my first visit there. I felt as if I returned to Tsarist Russia, where I have never in fact been. It was like a Christmas fairy tale.

This atmosphere gives a special charm to the liturgy and produces the originality of the ROCOR. Being deprived of it, ROCOR will be strangled by the embrace of the KGB.

#### **A few words about the author of this article:**

Konstantin Georgievich Preobrazhebsky was born in 1953 is a retired lieutenant-colonel and a famous KGB dissident and independent intelligence expert.

He left the KGB in 1991 and devoted his life to unmasking its inhumane character. He is the author of 2 books about the KGB, published in Japan, China and Russia. He also has published numerous articles and interviews in Russian and world media. In 1990 he was a columnist on the KGB problems in the "Moscow Times" newspaper.

He is an activist for human rights "Foundation Glasnost" (Moscow) and constant participant in the conferences like "The KGB: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow."

He was the first writer in Russia to describe the KGB from inside, the utilization of the Russian Orthodox Church for intelligence purposes. The chapter of his book "The KGB in Japan" is devoted to this theme. Also he is a famous Russian Japanologist, author of 4 books about Japan. In 1980-85 he was the TASS correspondent in Tokyo and also the officer of KGB intelligence there. His latest position in the KGB was personal advisor to the Deputy Head of KGB intelligence.

His courageous anti-KGB activities evoked great hatred from today's KGB, which is called the FSB. After Putin came to power, the repressions against the KGB dissidents became extremely harsh. It put Konstantin Preobrazhensky's life in danger, and in January, 2003, he moved to the USA.

#### **DECLARATION**

##### **Of Archbishop Mark to the Synod of Bishops Meeting of 11/24 October 2003**

I feel it necessary to make a declaration about the possible perspectives and aims of our ecclesiastical path as I see it.

In our understanding, there never was any doubt that we are the members of the one Russian Church. **Also, we have always recognized the Moscow Patriarchate as a part of the same Russian Church. Therefore, practically we have always recognized her sacraments.** [?! All emphasis by "Ch. N."]

According to our "Statutes" our plenary powers have a temporary character. When the regime in Russia would change and the Church will have more freedom to act [all the First Hierarchs were accustomed to speaking in terms of her **complete** freedom! "Ch. N."] we are called upon to participate in the revival of the faith, and accordingly are obliged to seek the unity of the Russian Church.

Undoubtedly, we were right when we criticized the MP some 10-15 years ago. But since that time drastic changes have happened (including the number and the quality of the episcopate) It is obvious that there has begun and there continues a healthy process. There is no reason to have to exclude ourselves from this process or, what would be even worse actually to contrast it to us. We are not a political organization, but the Body of Christ – and accordingly, we should carry on relations between us as among members of the same one Body, according to the word of Apostle: "That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all members rejoice with it" (Cor.12:25-26).

Recognizing ourselves to be just a part of the Russian Orthodox Church, we should, following the canonical rules of the Russian Church herself (Resolution # 362), **recognize the Moscow Patriarchate as the independent part of the Russian Church**, while leaving to the future All-Russian Council to express the opinion about the other possible parts of the one ecclesiastical body.

In the search for unity, we should not talk about the "submission", "annexing", "absorption" or similar, but in the spirit of humility to recognize in each other the status of one Russian Church. But the very search for unity is exclusively a podvig in which all the parts of the united Church will realize their origin [?!] from the same source, while taking into consideration their own paths during the terrible events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the paths of the other parts of the Russian Church, which were followed in unique and unprecedented size and circumstances in the whole history of the Church.

At the same time we do accept everything that is positive, which was occurred on this path and we do reject everything that is negative, which has afflicted the church life, foreign and planted from outside. We are called at present to strive for one target: the unity in sacraments, according to the spirit, tradition, and teaching of our Russian Church, while at the same time preserving the particularities of our ecclesiastical experience of our paths as well as upon our organical structures. Our goal may not be in exercised in extinguishing of the experience of another part of the Church, but be

aimed at development of the missionary problems of the Church of Christ: on the historical homeland as well as abroad, for the benefit of faithful people, who is looking forward to be closer to church and who compose in all the parts of the world the one flock of the Russian Church as whole. The basics of our life is the Cornerstone – Christ Himself. Only in Him we can find our unity in the podvig of faith, hope and love.

Munich, October 9/22<sup>nd</sup>, 2003

Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

Probably the founder of the Jesuits – Ignatius Loyola himself – would be jealous of this!

Archbishop Mark justifies his treachery by stating that supposedly now “fundamental changes (including the amount and quality of consistence of episcopate have happened” and that “Obviously there has begun and continues a process of healing”.

Based upon the research of the former priest Yakunin, we can with total reliability question the truth of Archbishop Mark's statement. Here, below, we print the list of known to us present members of the MP Synod (with the reservation that meanwhile some hierarchical titles might have changed). However, only one of them, Chrysostom of Vilna has admitted that he served in the KGB, but at the same time, he insisted that there was nothing wrong with that, because he never betrayed anyone!

So: Patriarch Alexis II has code name of “Drozdov” and has even received a special award from the KGB for his outstanding services to them.

Metropolitan Yuvenaly – “Adamant”

Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk – “Abbat”

Metropolitan Methody of Voronezh – “Paul”

Metropolitan Philaret of Minsk and Belorussia – “Ostrovsky”

Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk – “Mikhailov”

Metropolitan Chrysostom of Vilna – “Topaz”

These are the people with whom the traitors of the ROCOR are uniting with the active support of Archbishop Mark! The official Declaration of Archbishop Mark was published in the Synod's Internet site, with photographs of the ROCOR's delegation sitting at the same table with the false Patriarch Alexis Ridiger “Drozdov”!

## **DESECRATION OF MONUMENTS TO LEADERS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE WHITE MOVEMENT**

The Public Orthodox Committee for the defense and preservation of the monument for “Reconciliation of the Peoples of Russia and Germany” who fought in the World Wars and monuments to “the Leaders of the White Movement” and “Kossack Atamans” has reported that “the day of the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the First World War was marked by acts of vandalism”.

According to this information, “in the early morning of November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2003, unknown vandals defiled the only monument in Russia dedicated to participants of the First World War, which was put up in 1995 within 10m of the All Saints Church of a Patriarchal property, near the subway station “Sokol”. The vandals entered the property and overturned one of the monuments and the bases of other memorial plaques were covered with excrement, dirt, toilet paper. On the pedestals of memorable list of white generals and kossack atamans, the victims of the Red terror, they have placed dead pigeons and rats, and then left without being seen.

These desecrations were discovered by descendants of White Russian émigrés who came to Moscow from France and Argentina in order to place wreaths on these memorials.

This is already the third desecration of the memorial near the All Saints Church. The first happened on October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1995 at that time those “unknown” (?) put glue over the monument and some garbage. The second time happened on May 24, 2000, when 2 marble plaques were crushed. At that time the “authorities started a criminal investigation concerning acts of vandalism”.

At the same time that the vandalism occurred in Sokol, a similar desecration happened of the Vagansk Cemetery when a monument to the Tsar-Martyr Nicholas II was desecrated.

The Public Committee appeals to all the descendents of the White Movement to write protests to Putin, Alexis II and the embassies of European countries which took part in World War I and to published the information in the press.

## **FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS (a report of Bishop Gregory to Metropolitan Vitaly of July 17/30<sup>th</sup> 1993)**

To: the President of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCOR,  
His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly

### **REPORT**

Regarding rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate by Bishop Gregory the “Herald” of the German diocese (#1, 1993) an epistle was published of His Eminence Archbishop Mark in which it is stated:

“Our diocese has never neglected the possibility of conducting serious dialogue. Representatives of our diocese on various occasions have participated in the conversations with the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. When expressing a readiness to develop dialogue in the future, we have reached the limits permitted by our Council of Bishops”.

Was there any resolution of our Synod regarding permission for Archbishop Mark or any of our hierarchs to meet with the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate and to conduct with them any dialogues in the name of the Church Abroad or even in the name of one of the dioceses?

I personally do not know of such a regulation.

I believe, that if there were not such regulations, then the conduct of a dialogue by any one of our hierarchs as an individual – might *create a scandal within our flock abroad* and lead to confusing the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate, who might easily presume that *our Church indeed is on the path to rapprochement with her*. (Emphasis by "Ch. N.")

**Such dialogue might lead to basic changes in our former policies regarding the Moscow Patriarchate and it should not take place without a special resolution concerning this from the Council of Bishops.**

I have presented this report to the deliberations of the Council of Bishops in April, but all the meetings were so involved with the church situation in Russia that this matter was not discussed.

I return to it again because the minutes of the Diocesan Conference in Suzdal indicate that the aspirations of Archbishop Mark to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate continue.

Thus, the representative of a parish in Viatka, V. A. Polnoch, reports that "Archbishop Mark intends to come to Moscow for rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate".

Deacon Michael Maklakov (Moscow) "says that one of his acquaintances, who was a member of ROCOR, *following the blessing of Archbishop Mark, joined the Moscow Patriarchate* in the parish of Priest Asmus"

Unfortunately, I have heard on numerous occasion of the sympathy of VI. Mark toward the Moscow Patriarchate.

I am forced again to request the former answer my question: when and who has commissioned Archbishop Mark and, in general, any of our hierarchs to enter into the dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate?

Synod of Bishops' humble servant + Bishop Gregory

Of course, Bishop Gregory received no reply to this report to Metropolitan Vitaly!

#### Letter to Nicholas P. Churilov of June 19<sup>th</sup>/July 2, 1993

Dear Nikolai Pavlovich!

Pardon me for answering your letter of March 8<sup>th</sup>/April 15<sup>th</sup> so late. Certainly, a lot of my time was taken up by the Council and matters connected with it. Much of the Council didn't satisfy me and at present I am busy trying to resolve whatever I disagreed with and straighten out the mix ups. It takes more time and strength than straightening out of more normal phenomena. The secret agents do not sleep, and not all understand where is the truth and where things are leading. I hope I succeed in preventing the harm which they are attempting to thrust upon us.

At the same time I read an interesting book by St. Petersburg Metropolitan John about the Sergianist schism. Interestingly, nowhere does he mention the KGB, but writes "civil authorities", although to such persons as ourselves this is quite understandable. Doesn't this show that [he? – unclear in original] is some how is connected.

I am very pleased that you are busy with the Dogma of Redemption. I am too occupied with straightening out the Synod and its errors to be able to be involved in this matter which is so close to my heart. Age gives notice, by the way I work more slowly.

I hope that you have an air conditioner and that you do not suffer too much from the heat.

May the Lord preserve you and help in directing your work. Sincerely yours + Bishop Gregory

#### Letter to Metropolitan Vitaly of 1/14<sup>th</sup> 1990

Your Eminence, Grace-filled Archpastor!

In fulfilling your orders I have talked with His Grace Bp. Hilarion and have left him a note, a copy of which I also enclose. I was very much surprised that such a young person could forget such an important order of yours, as the correction of the Epistle's text. Probably he himself feels uncomfortable about it. Just in case, I have forwarded your order not verbally only, but also in writing.

To be truthful, I am disturbed that Vladyka Hilarion still has not obtained a visa. I am afraid that since Moscow already knows the reason for the forthcoming trip of our hierarchs, the Patriarchate might try to prevent it by the way of delaying the visas. Do you have a plan in this matter? [The acceptance of parishes of Archimandrite Valentin, "Ch. N."]

I have received today a copy of Vladyka Lazarus's report against the proposed consecration of Archimandrite Gury. I do not know him, but from those who saw him I didn't hear a single word in favor of his candidacy. All unanimously speak of him as looking senile. What benefit would come from this if his consecration creates such opposition from our only bishop in Russia? [Bishop Lazarus, "Ch. N."].

One more bewilderment: upon arriving at the Synod to meet with VI. Hilarion, I met next to him a hieromonk who has arrived from some place near Sarov. When I heard from VI. Hilarion that the day before he himself brought him from the airport, I presumed, that he is one of our minded people. But it turns out that he is a definite Sergianist. I could not understand how (it seems this is not a unique case) we invite Sergianists and host them in the Synod?

The optimists write and speak much about qualities of Gorbachev. I have read an interesting and sober evaluation in the American press. An interesting article about him was published in the [newspaper] "Novoye Russkoye Slovo" and I have made a copy for you. Our patriots in Russia are also very skeptical about him.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain Your Eminence's devoted servant + Bishop Gregory

**Additional explanation:** In the Council's Epistle, authored by Archbishop Anthony of Geneva, there was a scandalous paragraph about the validity of Moscow Patriarchate's sacraments, which stated that it depends upon the personal piety of the ministering clergyman. Bishop Gregory refused to sign this Epistle until this paragraph was taken out. Bishop Hilarion asked him to sign it and promised that when published, this paragraph would be omitted. Based upon this promise, Bishop Gregory signed the Epistle, but it was published in the unacceptable form. Only after several months had passed was the Epistle published omitting the scandalous paragraph again upon the insistence of Bishop Gregory! A similar case happened at the Bishops Council in the Lesna Convent (France) when Bishop Hilarion asked Bishop Valentine to sign an agreement, with the promise that his objections be included, but that was not done!

And the very latest example: in a telephone conversation with a prominent Australia clergyman we asked him: how could he sign the controversial resolution of the Australia — New Zealand Pastoral Conference?

The answer was: what was published didn't accurately correspond with the signed text!

**New books:**

Under the editorship of Mr. George Soldatow two collections in Russian of the minutes of Councils of Bishops of the ROCOR have been published for the years 1938-1939, as well as for 1946.

Each volume's price is \$10.00 and one may order it from:

Mr. George Soldatow  
3217 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave. N. E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55418 – 2526

In 2004 the minutes of the 1985-1986 Council should be published.