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EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE AUTONOMOUS RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Required to remain in the Denver-Colorado Diocese unexpectedly for two months due to a serious heart operation, Metropolitan Valentin was able to become closely acquainted with His Grace Gregory and also with his clergymen. This led to many discussions regarding the ideological and practical problems of ruling the diocese. This was the reason which forced the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church to write and publish the following letter to His Grace Bishop Gregory of June 3/16, 2004, # 130.

No. 130

June 3/16, 2004

Your Grace!

After spending approximately two months in the Denver Diocese, and meeting with you and your clergy on several occasions, I was greatly amazed by your behavior, reasoning, megalomania, and uncanonical actions, to wit:

1. During a conversation in the presence of three witnesses, who are priests, you insisted repeatedly that you should be appointed as ruling bishop over all Churches, not only in the USA, but in Korea, Bulgaria, China, and other countries as well, stressing that you are the only Orthodox bishop in the whole world and promising to "help" me in the amount of forty thousand American dollars, completely forgetting about the sin of simony;
2. You repeatedly and insistently suggested prayerful communion and Eucharistic union with a synod of the Greeks, getting those of your people who are close to you to support your idea, for which they also promised to "help" me in the amount of thirty thousand American dollars;
3. You repeatedly attempted to interfere in the administration of clergy not belonging to your diocese, demanding the removal of a venerable archpriest and other servants of the altar who were of no less importance, besmirching their honor and dignity, which is a canonical offense;
4. As witnessed by some of the clergy and laity, you do not recognize the uniqueness of baptism, and have the practice of re-baptizing and re-chrismating those who come to you. In all probability, you have forgotten the Creed, where we confess "One Baptism";
5. You have suspended some of the members of the clergy who served you faithfully and truly but had no desire to share in your dubious pretensions, and who dared to stand up against your constant pressure (неуемному натиску).
6. After being admonished in the presence of three witnesses of priestly rank, instead of repenting of your sinful actions, you wrote a report to the Synod of Bishops of the R.O.A.C., demanding an emergency meeting during the absence of its President. In your report, you, in essence, repeated your claims and [thus] yourself confirmed your inability to rule over a diocese or lead souls to salvation;
7. With premeditation, you attempted to lead members of the Synod of Bishops into error, slandering me by saying that I was a thief and "stole" a monk away from you (Igumen Fr. Andrei Maklakov), whose candidacy for the episcopacy was put forward by none other than you, and whereby you transferred him to the authority of the Synod of Bishops;
8. In your report you indicated that you incurred large expenses in connection with my medical treatment, and that you had taken care of all of the bills amounting to over a quarter of a million American dollars, when in actual fact, you paid not even one cent, and, to the contrary, presented me with a bill for my plane ticket for my trip from New York to Denver, and for room and board, in the sum of four thousand dollars;
9. While looking over your documents, I discovered that you had been using my forged seal (which I later took away from you), which is punishable as a capital crime.

From everything that has been said above, I have concluded that you are incapable of ruling a diocese, and I am therefore constrained to remove you temporarily from your diocese of Colorado as ruling hierarch, and to place you in retirement, living in Dormition Skete, without the right to serve or perform any sacraments, until such time as the Synod of Bishops can decide your case.

I consider the clergy, monastics, and faithful living in the Denver diocese, as being under the direct authority of the Synod of Bishops of the R.O.A.C. (also temporarily).

I would hope that you would be reasonable and would not dare to countermand my earlier recommendations and good advice, so that you might avoid being judged in a spiritual court by the Sobor of Bishops of the R.O.A.C.

**President of the
Synod of Bishops**

Metropolitan Valentin of Suzdal and Vladimir

After recovering his health to be able to return to Russia, Metropolitan Valentin visited New York. On Saturday June 14/27th the First Hierarch of the Autonomous Russian Orthodox Church served a vigil and on Sunday June 13/26th the Liturgy in St. Nicholas Church on Staten Island.

During the Hours he tonsured Nicholas Stanosheck reader and ordained him sub-deacon. At the same time, the rector of the church (Fr. Vladimir Shishkoff) was elevated to the rank of protopresbyter.

During the Divine Liturgy he ordained Deacon Fotios Rosebero to the priesthood and sub-deacon Nicholas Stanosheck to deacon.

Six priests concelebrated with Vladyka Metropolitan.

During his stay in the US, the Metropolitan accepted into his jurisdiction Archimandrite Ephraim, Abbot of the Greek Monastery of St. Barbara in New Jersey.

In order to organize the church administration in Eastern America, the First Hierarchy of the ROAC has established under his direct supervision a Diocesan Council, and appointed its members: Protopresbyter Vladimir Shishkoff, Protopresbyter Victor Melehov, Archpriest Spyridon Schneider and as Secretary, Abbot Andrew (Maklakov).

After laboring on church matters during his stay in America and regaining his health, Metropolitan Valentin left for Russia on July 3rd and, not making a stop in Moscow, went straight to Suzdal. Over there he was joyfully greeted by a group of some 50 to 60 parishioners with gifts and flowers. Immediately after the arrival of the Metropolitan, a thanksgiving moleben was served and thanks to the efforts of Archbishop Theodore, a festive trapeza.

MET. LAURUS, the MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND RESULTS OF NEGOTIATIONS

After Metropolitan Laurus returned to New York from Russia, the results of his trip to negotiate a union of the ROCOR with the MP, have finally, although not sufficiently, alarmed a number of clerics and some lay people.

In the press a number of appeals addressed to Metropolitan Laurus and his Synod have appeared expressing fear at the speed of this rapprochement with the Moscow Patriarchate.

It seems that 4 priests and a deacon of the Brazilian deanery of the South American Diocese have declared themselves most decisively in this matter.

Their declaration starts with the words: "Over the past two years we have followed with cautious silence and surprise the deeds of your Graces, which in our opinion lead us toward almost indiscernible heresy. We are referring to the trend toward Eucharistic and ecclesiastical communion with the Moscow Patriarchate, which has reached its climax in the composition of the letter answering Patriarch Alexis (the noted former KGB agent "Drozdov") which was signed by all our bishops.

"We declare that we are perplexed and in total disagreement with this trend, and we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous doctrine accepted by your Graces: "forget all that we wrote, that we said and that we thought". Such a doctrine totally contradicts the postulates of Orthodoxy, since it leads to a disdain for tradition. To be Orthodox means to know how to respect traditions established over many centuries. It means to know how to respect and adhere to the postulates which were handed to us and which state: "do not ever forget what we have taught you". In this manner, the declarations of your Graces, which violate the positions of the ROCOR regarding communication with the political-administration of the organization called 'the Moscow Patriarchate', which has submitted to anti-Christian dark powers, are absolutely unacceptable to us".

This excellent declaration ends with the words: "It is not in such a compromising rapprochement that we see the fulfillment of the prophecies of the resurrection of Holy Russia, but in the triumph of the purity of Christ's teaching preached by the Orthodox Church, a triumph that definitely would not bring with itself all the confusions, griefs, separations and worries that have happened as a result of the path Your Graces have chosen".

The letter of the South American clergy is 6 printed pages long and we regret it is not possible for us to publish it in full.

The appeal of clergy of the Eastern-American Diocese, gathered in New Jersey in the Jackson church in the presence of Metropolitan Laurus and the Synod Secretary Bishop Gabriel, is much less impressive, although in places it quite correctly states that: "We are deeply concerned with the obvious rush and tolerance with which the matter of reunion of the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate is received today, without taking into consideration those faithful who want to see this impending process of reunion be done with consideration for ecclesiastical and dogmatical truth. On the agenda is the matter of the future of the Church Abroad and the decision of her fate – 'to be or not to be' – which cannot depend upon a majority of votes. It should be the unanimous will of all members of our Church. Abrogation of this principle inevitably will lead to ruinous schism within the Church Abroad."

Then there are listed 10 paragraphs, which can be summed up by the two obstacles for union between the ROCOR and the MP – Sergianism and Ecumenism. These 24 naïve (!) pastors, one protodeacon and 2 deacons express the hope that as a result of an All-Diaspora Council it will be possible "In one mind and brotherly love to reach a stable and correct spiritual ideology of the free Russian Church".

Both appeals of the clergy to the members of Synod and the Council differ very much in tone.

The first appeal actually sees no possibility of uniting with the Moscow Patriarchate and with documentation insists that the present Synod has betrayed its former principles and the testaments of the First Hierarchs of the Church Abroad, while the appeal of the Eastern American Diocesan clergymen, against all logic and still unable to appreciate the unofficial, but real, split within the clergy and lay people, hopes that by relying on compromise, one can unite something that can not be united.

The Moscow Patriarchate has very provocatively demonstrated her faithfulness to the principles of the treacherous Declaration of Metropolitan Sergius and not without ulterior motives, namely in the presence of Metropolitan Laurus, has demonstrated to him that a condemnation of Sergianism on her part is absolutely out of question.

The Internet agency Vertograd/distribution #478 reported on June 4th that at the birthplace of Sergius Stragorodsky, the city council of Arzamas, supported by the Nizhni Novgorod Diocese of the MP, has recently decided to rename its "Market Place" as "Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Sergius Place".

Also, Alexis II, forced by the faithful of the lower classes to limit his concelebrations with Western heretics, at the same time has announced on numerous occasions that the MP cannot leave the Ecumenical movement because "she has to witness Orthodoxy" to outsiders.

Also a group of lay people has appealed to the Synod (P. Kolytyn, E. Magerovsky, Princess Bagration-Mouhransky and G. Schidlovsky) asking not to make any decisions regarding the union with the MP until the All-Diaspora Council has been called.

The group of Archbishop Lazarus also stepped forward with a critique of the policies of Metropolitan Laurus, while the former still insists that he belongs to the group of Metropolitan Vitaly, although on several occasions the latter stated that Archbishop Lazarus does not belong to his jurisdiction.

The Vertograd #476 of June 24th reports that "The First Hierarchy of the ROCOR (L) Metropolitan Laurus has not excluded [the possibility] that in order to solve the problem of reunion with the MP [sic, despite the fact that there never was a union, "Ch.N".] there might be a joint Local Council."

According to this agency, the acquaintance with monasteries and parishes in Russia "has been very impressive, said Metropolitan Laurus. We have come to the conclusion that it is a necessity to continue the work of the two committees established by us. The declarations that result from the mutual committees will be discussed at the meetings of the Synods and Councils of the MP and the ROCOR (L).

Then after that, there will be an All-Diaspora Council in our Church. Our Church has waited for many years in the hope that the time would come when we will be able to reunite [?!] and be together with Russia and the Russian people".

The very same Vertograd, of June 30th # 478, reported that "The joint meeting of the commissions for unification of the MP with the ROCOR (L) which was held in the offices of the Foreign Relations Department of the MP from June 23 to June 25 has concluded with the acceptance of a summation document [?!] which will be presented for examination by the Synods of both Churches. The content of this document has not been disclosed, but it is known that it defines the mutual position of both "branches" of Russian Orthodoxy regarding matters that previously consisted of polemics between them: above all, the relationship with the civil authorities and the nature of participation by the MP with Ecumenical organizations".

The dialogues of the two delegations were headed by Archbishop Innocent of Korsun (from the MP) and Archbishop Mark of Berlin and Germany, (from the ROCOR).

The Internet "Portal CREDO.RU" (with no particular date) has published a "Commentary for the Day" with the title: "Game of the Hierarchs. Negotiations of the ROC MP and ROCOR (L) through the eyes of a psychologist and in almost scientific language".

The article consists of 4 printed pages and we will omit the "psychology" and make the practical extracts from this analysis.

It is reported that "1. The meeting of the First Hierarchs was prepared ahead of the time, reservations made, twice postponed and finally, about two months prior to the events, the length designated and even the exact date appointed: May 18th.

"Nevertheless, the meeting happened on May 14th, a few days before the date set two month previously. Since these dates played an important fatal role, let us consider in detail the first bold line of this picture: who set the date – the ROC MP or the ROCOR(L)? Obviously: the inviting party; it had to prepare the agenda and had the right of the last word; besides, it wasn't the petitioner. Understandably the retouching of the picture remains with the second party; certainly she was not utterly reckless and didn't depend completely upon a Russian "perhaps", but to what degree the lapses with the dates was planned at least by some of her representatives, who had a voice in it, and to what extent it was forced by the ROC MP – remains a field covered by the retouching and does not concern our analysis. One thing is clear: the ROCOR(L) was placed in a totally no-win situation and the offer was accepted. (all emphasis by "Ch. N.")

"What do we have further? On May 14th the delegation arrives to Moscow. The program of events seems to be innocent. On the very same day, there is a warm meeting with Patriarch Alexis and pastoral matters are discussed.

"And suddenly, on the next day an unpleasant "unexpected surprise". On the Boutovo field there are common prayers, but how to refuse them when you were so cordially received and especially if these are prayers for the New Martyrs...?"

Then this account gives the details about these prayers published by us in the last issue of "Church News" when the Patriarch praised Metropolitan Sergius in the presence of Metropolitan Laurus.

This is a "situation from which there is only one diplomatic outcome: to keep silent and pretend nothing of the sort ever happened. Or to make a strong protest. The delegation chose the first... Later on, after the end of the trip, they will write a justification: the trip was postponed twice and only upon our arrival to Russia was it clear why we made it, in God's providence, exactly in May... But who will be deceived by nice words, especially if they are uttered post factum?"

Paragraph 2 says: "looking from the outside one might gain the impression that as a sort of reward for good behavior, there is the fun part, however, actually its just one more game.

"The guests travel to various places of glory, the tension on the leash is loosened, but only to a certain degree. And here there is another bold line: during the trips the guests visit only MP churches and not once visit the ROCOR(L) parishes, even when they are in the same town where these parishes exist. Only on the last day did Metropolitan Laurus

briefly visit his church in the Moscow suburbs. Even more, the clergy and bishops were not included in the list of invited guests to the local festivities, and one of them, Bishop Yevtikhy, even had to use fraud in order to meet with his First Hierarch, who was in Yekaterinburg. On the ROCOR(L) official site not a word about it!"

At the end of his analysis of the "games" of MP and Metropolitan Laurus, the author of this article writes: "Those Abroad constantly state that the negotiations were successful and very satisfactory, but when one asks them to mention concrete paragraphs or points which resulted in at least some positive results: it seems they have no answers... Reaching the grand total: it has to be admitted that in all the games those Abroad have suffered defeat. And was there not great gain on the part of the ROC MP?"

A daily internet journal of Priest-monk Gregory (Lurie) on June 29th quite correctly notes: "Actually, the present ROCOR(L) already in no way ideologically and canonically differs from the ROC MP. After entering in prayerful communion with the 'Mother Church' she has acknowledged the right of the latter to be in the similar communion with Constantinople, Antioch, Rome, Ecumenists and any others you want to name. By graciously listening to the speech of the Patriarch about the 'historical role of wise Sergius', it has recognized that under Soviet conditions it would have behaved in the same way as this person for whom squares are named. The most successful business man in a cassock, Fr. Peter Holodny, to a considerable degree has united his commercial interests with those of colleagues from the ROC MP".

SITUATION OF ROCOR(L) PARISHES IN RUSSIA REGARDING UNITY NEGOTIATIONS WITH MP

The results of the negotiations of the Church Abroad about unification with the Moscow Patriarchate affect above all the parishes in Russia ruled by Bishop Yevtikhy. The parishes in the European part of Russia are under Bishop Michael (Donskov) of Boston, a person with the education of a medical assistant, who has no idea of the church canons. The parishes in Ukraine are under Bishop Agathangel (Pashkovsky).

Upon arriving in Siberia, Metropolitan Laurus did everything possible not to compromise himself in the eyes of Moscow Patriarchate, whose guest he was, by meeting with Bishop Yevtikhy. In his interview on the NTV channel, Bishop Yevtikhy acknowledged that a difficult time for ROCOR(L) parishes in Russia is beginning. According to this Internet publication Metropolitan Laurus, actually formally renounced this diocese in Russia.

In effort to secure his position, according to Vertograd/distribution #474, Bishop Yevtikhy met with the MP Archbishop of Tobolsk and Tumen Dimitry. The meeting was organized by the General Federal Inspector of Tuman Region, Serge Smetaniuk. According to his report, both hierarchs declared that: "A common mission lies before the two branches of the Russian Orthodox Church – the spiritual resurrection of the people". According to Archbishop Dimitry, "we have no disagreements about our relationship with parishioners. We should unite our efforts in our aspiration to preserve for our descendants the great historical and cultural heritage of the Russian people. The clergy has to carry out great and scrupulous work in order to achieve the prayerful, canonical and structural unity of the Russian Orthodox Church. But the first steps toward this union already prove that this is the only correct decision which is supported by millions of parishioners in Russia and Abroad".

One has to think that Bishop Yevtikhy reached this decision in a hurry: his First Hierarch demonstratively has renounced him, the Moscow Patriarchate probably will not recognize his episcopal rank and there is a chance that due to protection, he will get a promise that after joining the MP he will be later re-consecrated a bishop. And meanwhile, he is trying to get this protection.

Hierarchs of both the Church Abroad and the MP "have visited the Abalak Monastery and had a meeting with parishioners, after which Archbishop Dimitry invited his guests for a thanksgiving service in the Sophia-Dormition Cathedral".

The representative of the Tumen administration, Serge Smetaniuk, said that the matter of unification is an internal matter of the Church, but "we will greet the aspirations of our hierarchs toward dialogue, since it has tremendous importance for the spiritual and moral development of society. Today the parishioners saw common prayer of the representatives of the two dioceses, this is a very joyful fact: after all, in the conscience of the people the Russian Orthodox Church was and is always united".

One can presume that not all the parishes, which have left the MP for reasons of principle, would agree with such compromising politics and will begin to leave.

LITTLE KNOWN TRIP OF BISHOP GREGORY (GRABBE) TO SUZDAL IN 1995

Some of our subscribers in conversations about church matters also expressed interest in the trip of Bishop Gregory to Suzdal, which happened in the spring of 1995. They also expressed a wish that I publish the reasons for this trip.

As early as 1992 this editor proposed my father go to Suzdal. In reply he put up his hands and said: "With what shall I go?"

However, at the very beginning of 1995 in a conversation with me, (having no connection of the subject at hand) he suddenly said: "I have completely crossed out all our hierarchy" and we continued our unimportant conversation. But in May of 1995, he suddenly told us that he was going to Suzdal. The doctor who treated him, said it would be suicide. Vladyka himself of the eve of departure said that the trip would be very hard for him, but it was necessary.

Bishop Gregory arrived in Suzdal in May, during the Pascal period. There he participated in a Synod meeting. He could not serve because he was in a wheel chair, but he took Communion. In Suzdal Vladyka met with some catacomb Church members, who came from a distant place just to meet with him, visited some dozen parishes and tired, but happy, returned home.

After his return he told us: "I did all I possibly could. Now I can die," and he peacefully reposed in the house of his younger daughter on October 7th, 1995.

Upon finding out about the trip to Suzdal of Bishop Gregory, Metropolitan Vitaly wrote him a letter which stated that at the Synod meeting of July 5th (new calendar) this matter was discussed and that "You were in Suzdal in complete prayerful communion with the suspended Archbishop Valentin. The Synod of Bishops in no way can agree with this. The first suggestion was to have you suspended from serving. However due to extreme weakness you cannot serve... Knowing your former merits, I want you to accept my letter as a strong reprimand for such an absurd act on your part, which in no way corresponds to your general behavior. I have also decided to give a reprimand, knowing you for more than 30 years, as a person of exceptional mind in the defense of our Church...."

The letter of Metropolitan Vitaly was received about 2 to 3 weeks before the repose of Vladyka Gregory and he was already so weak that he would not be able "to see any value in it". Therefore, Bishop Gregory passed away without seeing this letter.

In the issue #5A (48) of 1995, we published a Xerox copy of this letter, Bishop Gregory's testament and the addition to the testament in which Vladyka asked that "my funeral be performed only by the priests (without the participation of the hierarchs) in the Kazan Church of Newark in which I have prayed for the last years of my life".

Being aware of unfriendliness on the part of Metropolitan Vitaly and a number of Synod members, Bishop Gregory didn't want to put them in a false situation during the funeral service. This was the reason for this addendum. 16 priests concelebrated at the funeral service.

However, it happened to be not necessary: **not a single Bishop of the Church Abroad considered it necessary to see him in the coffin even during periods outside the service**, although the addendum to the testament was published only after the funeral. Also, the family of Bishop Gregory received not a single sympathy letter from any of the bishops. The repose of the main worker of the Synod for almost 55 years less than 2 or 3 months before this anniversary went completely unnoticed by the members of the Synod of Bishops.

A. G. SCHATILOFF

MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE AND POLITICS

The Internet edition of the newspaper "NG Religii" of June 16th reports that "According to the opinion poll made on order of the "NG" by the Center "The Voice of the People" (see BG of June 1st, 04) it became clear that in May of the current year, Alexis II **has returned to being among the 10 leading politicians of Russia, and got the prestigious seventh place**".

Further it is reported that "Apparently, the successful negotiations with the delegation of the Church Abroad, headed by Metropolitan Laurus (Shkurla), which in particular have created a wide social response, have influenced the rating of the Patriarch. Let us remember that the process of unification of the two Churches was started by the President of the RF, in September of last year".

"Alexis II is characterized as a far seeing politician by his recent visit to the state Duma (parliament) on June 4th, during which he met with its president, Boris Gryzlov, and he made a speech before the deputies. It was the very first visit of the First Hierarch of the ROC to the Federal Congress in the history of parliaments in Russia. Contrary to all expectations the visit didn't have a solemn character. The aim was very pragmatic".

Basically, the visit by the MP was to influence the Duma's deputies to return to the Church property confiscated by the Communists, which has already been partly "returned" to it and the problems of taxation connected to it.

Not limiting himself to his own church territory, the Moscow Patriarchate, according to the Internet newspaper "Commerzant Daily" a few months ago "started to build Euro-Orthodoxy" attached to the European Council and has opened its own embassy.

By a decision of the Synod of the MP, its parish in Strasbourg has been put under the immediate administration of Alexis II and at the parish itself there was established a permanent representation of the ROC, which will also represent it in the European Council.

The most interesting thing is that according to the newspaper "this new, never seen before, diplomatic initiative of the ROC came as a total surprise to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs'!

A bit further it is reported: "After hearing from a correspondent of the diplomatic initiative on part of the Church, the operative section of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs clearly was perplexed... and advised him to get in touch with the clerk of the MFA".

Bishop Mark (Golovin) of Yegorievsk declared that, "Nothing unusual has happened. The All Saints Parish simply didn't have a permanent rector. And so, in order that he not have to travel back and forth, it was decided that there should be a permanent person. The main thing is that he minister to the Orthodox people of Strasbourg. Although certainly according to his possibilities, he will participate in the various events of The European Council".

It is interesting that the Paris secretariat of the Bishop of Korsun believed that everything was fine in the parish. An employee, Anna, said: "We have ourselves just now found out about the Synod's decision. But there already is a priest".

It seems that this action of the MP was unexpected by those who are not initiated into her secrets, and is connected with Ridiger's idea to create Metropolitan regions that would include all the dioceses and parishes "of the Russian tradition" all around the world and this is also a major goal of President Putin.

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

A Greek-American newspaper "The National Herald" of July 3-4, '04 reported that Pope John Paul and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew made an emotional joint declaration calling on all Western and Orthodox Christians to unite. The Patriarch said that for him this joyous occasion was clouded with "disappointment" due to the lack of unity. But the Pope assured him that Roman Catholics are irrevocably committed to mending the historic rupture between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity. Both of them insisted that their presence on the steps of St. Peter's Basilica was not merely ceremonial, but a genuine attempt to mend their split of the 11th century, yet this is at a time when Catholicism is expanding on Russian territory!

Bartholomew had to acknowledge that it will take some time to reach this unity. At the feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, the Pope was in a red vestment during the mass and Bartholomew in a mantle with a golden omophorion.

The Vatican has reported that in the near future there will be issued a joint declaration by both heretics.

The press has reported that the Pope has already on several occasions expressed his remorse about the Crusaders' rampage in Constantinople that happened 800 years ago, in 1204.

"How can we not share, at a distance of eight centuries, the anger and pain of that times?" said the head of world Catholicism Pope John Paul to "the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch".

The Vertograd agency # 480 "Bartholomew I concelebrated at a solemn mass dedicated to the feast of Apostles Peter and Paul. The service, conducted on the evening of June 29th (Catholics serve masses also in the evenings, "Ch. N."), was presided over by Pope John Paul II. **The leaders of both churches stood at the altar during the mass**, then they addressed the faithful with sermons and recited the Creed. After that the Ecumenical Patriarch stepped aside and the mass continued.

During the service Orthodox hymns were also sung. A part of the Gospel was read in Latin and Greek.

According to the same agency, but # 481 of July 4th the joint declaration of the Pope and Ecumenical Patriarch was signed by them on July 1st. In it both heretics expressed their desire to "follow the path toward complete union" and have pointed out that the "deep political and social changes in Europe will have significant consequences for the future of Christianity on this continent."

This blasphemous violation of the Apostolic canons, which sternly forbid praying with heretics even in a private home, in no way has any effect on the representatives of contemporary "global Orthodoxy".

SERBIAN CHURCH AND ROMAN CATHOLICS

The bulletin Ecumenical News International of June 30th has reported that the Serbian Church has pledged to have closer relations with the Roman Catholics.

At the Conference of Roman-Catholic Bishops of Europe, held on June 12th in Belgrade, it declared that "We must be aware of the responsibility we bear. If we remain solely at the level of speaking and writing, we will be like a tree with beautiful leaves but no fruit".

The Joint declaration of the Serbian Patriarchate and the Catholics has confirmed that "the closer inter-church contacts disproved the claim in atheist circles that churches are a divisive factor in society," while actually they serve "the real spiritual unification of Europe".

Although some Serbian bishops try to convince trusting people that Patriarch Paul actually is not compromising the Faith at all, we believe that this recent declaration, made by the head of the Serbian Church, is scandalous enough.

However, the Serbian Church, from the era when the kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slavs (two last nations being Catholic) was founded, never held the rite of the "Sunday of Orthodoxy" (the first Sunday of the Great Fast) with its anathemas of heretics. Being guests of the Serbian Church, Metropolitans Anthony and Anastassy felt it was not tactful to hold this rite in their churches in Belgrade.

The rite of Orthodoxy was for the first time served early in the tenure of Metropolitan Philaret.

CATHOLICS AND HINDUS

We have received a letter, signed by a Monsignor John Esposito and 4 Catholic clergymen, protesting a Hindu service on May 5th in the church of the Fatima Mother of God (who supposedly demanded in a vision to 3 children that Catholics convert Russia).

The Hindu priests were permitted to use the Catholic altar and perform their pagan rites there. The pagan priest wore his ritual garments.

This event was widely described on TV and in the press, in particular in the newspaper "Portugal News" of May 22nd. The permission for this act was given by the director of this shrine, Fr. Luciano Guerra.

The authors of this letter wrote that they tried to prevent these pagans from worshipping in a Christian shrine by writing an article entitled "Fatima to Become Interfaith Shrine? An Account of One Who Was There" in the newspaper "The Fatima Crusader" some six months earlier.

Is it not possible that Patriarch Paul or his heir, in accordance with the Ecumenist agenda, might also offer his church for the pagan worship? However, to begin with, there already is the case of heretic Episcopalians serving in the patriarchal chapel some 10 years ago!

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH IN COURT IN ISTANBUL

The bulletin "Ecumenical News International" of June 16th reported that Patriarch Bartholomew was to appear before a Turkish court on criminal charges, accused of the illegal dismissal of a Bulgarian priest.

The Patriarch came to court accompanied by the 12 priests who were accused of being his collaborators.

The members of a Bulgarian community in Turkey brought him to court insisting that after 1840 the Bulgarian Church left the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and therefore, Bartholomew – who considers himself to not so much a "senior among the equals", but more the head of world Orthodoxy – had no right to dismiss their rector, Constantine Kostof.

Priest Kostof was dismissed in 2002 and the Bulgarian community insists that due to Bartholomew's decision they are deprived of being able to pray in their own church.

The Ecumenical Patriarch stated in court that, "Mr. Kostof refused to commemorate the name of the highest religious leader in the Liturgy as was required. We warned him. When he did not comply he was dismissed".

The Bulletin states that if Patriarch Bartholomew is found guilty, he could face up to 5 months in jail.

The First Metropolitan of the ROCOR considered only Greek chauvinism as the cause why in the thirties Constantinople refused to recognize the Bulgarian Church as a Local Church and he had cordial relations with the Bulgarian Metropolitan Symeon.

CREED A CAUSE OF SCHISMS – SEVERAL POLEMICAL BOOKS

"The New York Times" of June 5th in the section "Beliefs" published an article signed by Peter Steinfelds entitled: "What's a creed good for? Stirring up a hot debate for one thing. Making a radical stand, for another."

According to Luke Timothy Johnson, a professor of the New Testament at Emory University: "Being part of the intelligentsia has meant despising creeds in general and Christianity's creed in particular."

A year ago Professor Johnson published a book entitled: "The Creed: What Christians Believe and Why It Matters". His book defends both the necessity for the creed and its content.

He believes that, "My aim is to make the creed controversial for those Christians who say it but do not understand it and therefore do not grasp what a radical and offensive act they perform."

The Professor has pointed out that at present, by far not all Christians accept the Nicene Creed, the Symbol of the Faith. Many consider it to be a dangerous replacement of Scripture and distraction from sincere prayer and virtuous Christian life.

A considerable number of contemporary Christians generally reject the creed by insisting that, "I am spiritual, but not religious".

Quite a few Western Christians believe that, "Belief in the Creed is a sign of intellectual failure and an abandonment of critical thinking and that it is a rejection of scientific evidence and subordination of individual judgment".

A book about the diversity of Christianity and against the Creed was published by Elaine Pagels entitled "Beyond Belief".

The article about the Creed mentions that the struggle against it has made these books extremely popular.

The most popular is the novel by Dan Brown "The Da Vinci Code" in which it is stated that the Creed was composed in the 4th century at the demand of the Emperor Constantine and at that time, in the game for power between the Emperor and the Patriarch, they "ruthlessly suppressed evidence that Jesus was not divine".

Unfortunately, in our time of general apostasy from the Church's teaching which is replaced with emotional words of one's own, the lack of understanding of the meaning of the Creed has affected not only the Western heretics, but also many contemporary Orthodox!

FROM THE UNPUBLISHED WORKS:

(Letter to Metropolitan Vitaly of June 26th/July 9th 1993)

Your Eminence, the Merciful Archpastor,

I am alarmed at the situation that has been generated in Russia, which we have to evaluate soberly in order not to make a fateful mistake, as a result of which other hierarchs might follow the example of Archbishop Lazarus.

I have heard a lot of criticism not only from Russia, but also Abroad, which considers our tactic to be inconsistent and confusing. Especially is criticized the attitude toward Bishop Valentin. He is still holding firm, but there are already those who are pushing him toward the path of Archbishop Lazarus.

I was always a supporter of consecrations in Russia, but I know that for some reason, all of our three hierarchs in Russia do not trust our candidate, elected without their participation. [Yevtikhy Koorochkin, "Ch. N."] This and also the feeling by many that we have been unjust toward Bishop Valentin and his clergy require our special care and conciliatory efforts.

I send the enclosed material and **for the sake of preserving the level of your authority** [emphasis in the original, "Ch. N."] I beg you not to rush into anything before the meeting of the Synod.

Your eminence's humble servant, + Bishop Gregory

ENCLOSURE: Report "Thoughts Regarding the Cases of Bishops Barnabas and Valentin" June 26th/July 9th, 1993

(Letter to Archbishop Anthony of San Francisco of July 24th/August 6th 1994)

Your Eminence, dear Vladyko!

I write to you greatly troubled by the growth in our Church of ecclesiastical lawlessness.

Bishop Hilarion, who before leaving for San Francisco promised to me the copies of its minutes, has returned from the Sobor. I saw him and he told me that he is forbidden to give me information about the Council. He could not give me any reasons for this. I could not even get information about whether my reports were heard by the Council and what were the decisions about them. No explanation for depriving me of my elementary rights as a bishop were given to me.

It seems that the reason is that I understand the importance of the Regulation of November 7/20 1920 differently from the Metropolitan, who interprets it only as a basis for our existence abroad, which is not even mentioned therein. He has no idea that the Regulation of the All-Russian Church Authority, presided over by the saintly Patriarch Tikhon should be applied to our situation. Our Synod at that time had just arrived abroad and had not yet established itself.

Certainly I will write a protest and will give the evidence, but will not again [such a] report, based upon the decision of the Supreme Organ of our Church Administration, headed by the St. Confessor, be given no attention due to the Metropolitan's error?

And the restructuring of [our] Church, legally speaking, persists in a whole number of his mistakes.

It is a great mistake on our part to show disregard for this legislative document. It should be cherished and used as a guide. Although the Metropolitan and maybe some other hierarchs may dislike Vladyka Valentin, he has carried out a great deal of constructive work. Even if we consider that he did something incorrectly, we cannot find fault when we evaluate his extensive work in opening and uniting parishes in Russia. The main thing is to unite and not to create parallel contradicting trends. The latest consecration did just that and had that as its aim. By the way, I was in New York, yet I was not informed of this, although I live near the Synod.

Asking for your holy prayers, I remain your brother loving you in Christ, + Bishop Gregory

NOTE: According to the Statutes of the ROCOR (Paragraph 8) when placing a name in candidacy for episcopal consecration his biography used to be sent to all members of the Council with requests to send opinions of the candidate!

In this regard, on February 8/21 1995 Bishop Gregory sent Metropolitan Vitaly a protest report.