

*A letter from an accuser.*



HOLY TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY

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March 27/April 9, 1986

Dear Vladika Anthony,

I offer to you my most humble obeisance, and ask from you a prayer of forgiveness for my many sins and offences committed before our God.

To start with, I would like to acquaint your Grace with myself. My monastic name is Benjamin. I was named after the New Russian Hieromartyr Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd. I am a rassafor monk under obedience to Archimandrite Panteleimon of the Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston, Mass.

It has been brought to my attention that there is an investigation concerning certain types of allegations made against the moral integrity of our spiritual community, and that your Grace has been asked to investigate the matter. Because of the indissoluble bond of love we have here at the monastery, I feel compelled to write a letter of explanation which constitutes the reasons for me being a resident of the monastery.

I begin to write to you, Vladika, with great fear and trepidation. For, to tell you the truth, I am not very well educated in the knowledge of writing. And most of all, addressing someone of your personage. Please pardon me if anything I relate to you lacks the necessary sense of discretion while trying to enumerate past remembrances and ideas.

It is essential to relate to you that before coming to Boston I was in the Syrian archdiocese and had felt a call to the monastic way of life. I asked my parish priest if he had known of any Orthodox Monasteries in America and if he did, would he bless me to go. After making a diligent search in obtaining the desired information, he directed me to go to Saint Tychon's Monastery in South Canaan, PA., which was under the O.C.A. Eventually I made arrangements to go and stay there for a few months. While there, as was my invariable duty, I made a strict observance of all that went on in the community. I made acquaintanceship with certain members of the brotherhood, and this allowed me to develop a practical curiosity for what I wanted to find out. After a while it became obvious that there was a great lack of knowledge concerning the rule of monastic discipline. There was hardly any distinction in regard to the canonical requirement of keeping the fasts. Also, I heard of the most nonsensical theological ideas that could possibly exist. One member of the brotherhood actually addressed a youth group on what he called "the feminine aspect of the Holy Spirit". All the time he kept making references to certain Church Fathers of whom I had never even heard. Years later, when I called to mind this lecture, I understood that he was preaching the false teaching of "Sophiology", which sprung up in the Paris School of Theology in the first part

of this century, and that these so-called church fathers that were so obscure in name were in reality the professors of the Paris school. After hearing and seeing all the artificial piety of this place, I was at a loss what to do. I knew I didn't want to stay. A few days later I received a phone call from a very dear friend that had just spent a few weeks at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston. I told him of my troubles and he in turn convinced me to get in contact with Abbot Panteleimon and explain my spiritual objective to him. By the great providence of Christ, I spoke with the Abbot over the phone and expressed my thoughts to him. He told me that he would be very happy to speak with me in person if ever the chance would permit, but would not really desire to give too much advice because of the fact of me being in another jurisdiction. I was very pleased to receive his invitation, so I immediately abandoned St. Tychon's for Boston.

I arrived at the Monastery on the eve of the Feast of Saint Elias the Prophet, 1980. The Elder received me warmly and we talked at length about the jurisdictional problems and the big problem of the heresy of Ecumenism. I was certain that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad was where I wanted to be, for it was obvious to me that our hierarchs were well defined in the Faith.

The Abbot Panteleimon had me stay and observe the community life for a while and then he sent me to Jordanville to see if I might like it there better. I went to New York and had ample time to decide, and I returned to Boston.

I was soon enrolled in the rank of the novices, and after three years, on the giving-up of the Feast of the Holy Transfiguration, 1983, was tonsured into the rassofo.

On a few occasions I have expressed my desire to go to Mt. Athos and other places. The Abbot always tells me if there is discernment involved and he recognizes it as a sure understanding of the Divine Will, he would give his blessing for me to go. As of now, I no longer have a desire to go anywhere. There has never been any sort of suggestion made to me that my personal integrity or reputation would be maligned in any way. He always tells us that the doors are opened both ways, and if we leave, he prays that it is with the love of God.

Now as a son of obedience, as sinful as I am, I have made, to the best of my feeble ability, as intelligent an evaluation of Abbot Panteleimon as I could. For in resting on the statement made by Saint John of the Ladder who says: "If there is any intelligence and prudence in us, we ought first to question and examine, and even, so to speak, test our helmsman, so as not to mistake the sailor for the pilot, a sick man for a doctor, etc. But once we have entered into the arena of piety and obedience, we must no longer judge our good manager." (Step 4:6).

We are all familiar with the recent departure of our spiritual brother, Father Mamas, who was a monk of the great schema. I was horrified to hear that he is propagating the malicious idea that Abbot Panteleimon preaches an abominable blasphemy concerning the kind of love the Saviour had for Saint John the Theologian. It is supposed to imply that it was physical and not spiritual. Vladika! I will tell you in all truth, that when I was 17 years old, I left the Church and started to study theology under a certain sectarian minister who claimed that "Jesus the Man" (for he believed that the Saviour was a man

\* | that became God, and not God become man), had sexual relations with both his male and female disciples. I brought this to the Elder's attention one time during confession, and how he reacted to this gave me to understand how genuine a servant of God he is. My Abbot's soul is easily disposed to compunction and the sensitivity of certain subjects can inflame in him a certain kind of zealous witness for "true belief". He marvelled that anyone could think such a thing, and that if any person did, it is an absolute sign that he suffers from the evil suggestions of the devil. The Abbot said that this false doctrine was very blasphemous and downright atheistic.

Abbot Panteleimon is far from immoral. And it is incomprehensible to me how Frs. Mamas and Gregory could say such things. I assure you that what they say is slanderous, diabolical, and evilly malicious, and geared to discredit the monastery.

I had known Fr. Mamas for five years and often spoke with him concerning monastic obedience. I looked up to him as a younger brother looks to his older brother for advice. I knew full well that he had trodden the spiritual path long before I even set foot on it. I trusted in his judgments. We all know the love he had for our Elder. And he often spoke freely of this love and admiration he had for him. Like I say, we were all very well acquainted with him and much to our dismay, we all started to notice a change in Fr. Mamas' monastic temper. The outward characteristics of his personality started to change for the worse. He did not conduct himself with the grace that becomes an obedient monk. He seemed full of disturbances and his demeanor became proud and kind of haughty. If the Abbot asked him to do something, he would often snap back with a rude remark. We all feared he was falling away from his vows, which later proved true.

Here I would like to quote part of a conversation St. Gregory of Sinai had with St. Maximus of Kapsokalivia on Mt. Athos. St. Gregory asked what the certain signs of prelest were, and the Great Maximus answered him: "Certain things are signs of deception, but others are the sign of grace. The evil spirit of error, when it draws near to a man, confuses his mind and makes it frenzied. It hardens his heart and darkens it; it occasions cowardice, fear, and arrogance. It makes his mind lose reason and becomes demonized and incites him to say improper and blasphemous words with his mouth. Who ever has that spirit of deception is frequently angry and full of wrath, and does not know humility at all, neither true mourning and tears, but always boasts of his achievements, and glorifies himself and without shame and fear of God is found with the passions. In the end, he goes completely out of his reason and comes to utter perdition!" From such deception may the Lord deliver us by your prayers!

Now from reports we have received, it has become apparent that Fr. Mamas is acting long these lines. I must say that I have never heard the Abbot utter a blasphemous word with his mouth, nor has he ever displayed any sign of prelest. His mind is always balanced and seems illuminated with Divine Knowledge. His soul reflects the fruits of the Holy Spirit: meekness, long-suffering, compassion, gentleness, joy, and love and all the rest. I always find much relief from my many temptations when I go and confide my thoughts to him. To me, he is a touchstone of spiritual refreshment.

It horrifies me to see such sad things concerning my fallen God-brother.

Pride made the morning-star fall from Heaven, so I presume that it was pride that made Fr. Mamas fall from the heaven of our monastery. St. John of the Ladder says that God rightly abandons the proud that others may learn to be humble. I pray we all learn true humility and mourning.

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Once again I assure you, dear Vladika, that the Abbot Panteleimon is a very moral man, and if he was not, I would not be here.

Please forgive me if my statements might seem proud and opinionated, but I had to say what I must. Please pray for me.

Your Child in Christ,

*Fr. Benjamin, Monk*

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*Now Fr. Benjamin is using the old argument — he didn't know! The following is from another of our letters that show how absurd + false this argument is.*

One other thing which the bishops of the Russian Synod steadfastly preferred to ignore was that for over a period of years, the present accusers — both before and after their departure — had sent letters of gratitude to the monastery, praising the abbot and the whole brotherhood and expressing the good memories they had of their stay at the monastery, or, on the other hand, complaining that the monastery was too strict! In this manner, they themselves refute themselves, without there being any other need of a refutation of the accusations which they concocted later. These letters are in the monastery's files.

What are the accusers' replies to their own letters which so completely contradict what they are saying today? They reply that for years they did not know, or were deluded, and it is only of late that "the scales fell from their eyes" and they came to understand (after 12 or 15 years in the monastery!) that certain things were wrong.

They didn't know, or they were deluded, they say. Yet, the epistles of St. Paul are read every day (in English) in our daily Liturgies in the monastery. Does not St. Paul condemn these very sins openly and repeatedly? Are the accusers trying to tell us that they've never heard of Sodom and Gomorrah? Are not the Lives of the Saints (many of which deal specifically with the sin of homosexuality) read every single day in the church after the services and in trapeza in our monastery? The complete life of St. Andrew the Fool for Christ — which was translated by a member of our community — repeatedly and very graphically condemns these specific sins. This life, too, is read in our refectory every year on the feast day of the Saint. Furthermore, the lives of the New Martyrs under the Turkish yoke (many of which have been translated by fathers of the monastery) make frequent reference to the sin of homosexuality, because the Moslem Turks were very much addicted to this particular perversity and many young Christians were martyred precisely because they would not consent to give in to such sexual advances on the part of their Turkish oppressors. Yet, our accusers all use the same story: they did not know! The only excuse they (grown men, supposedly) could have for not knowing, of course, is if they were totally deaf and blind.

July 5, 1989 (o.c)

Dear Fr. Isaac,

In 1950 July 20 (o.c) I came to the Monastery on my own free will and now again on today's date on my own free will I am leaving. During my stay here I have no complaints of any kind against my Superior and brethren <sup>my</sup> conduct towards me has always been proper and without reproach. Basically I do not want to live in the Monastic life and that is why I am leaving.

Thank you for your love + prayers.

With love in Christ

Fr. Benjamin -

George Ellis

Dear Fr. Barnabas,

Just a tearful note to say  
I love you and farewell.

Please pray for me always  
you taught me alot. Thank  
you.

Tell George the Plumber  
the same. I feel if ~~he~~<sup>I</sup> had  
a Father like George I would  
have been more of a success  
in anything I would put my  
hand at.

I love you.

— Fr. Remigius

From a letter written  
by Fr Benjamin

NOV 25, 1989

PREPARED BY	
AIE	

Dearest Elder Panteleimon and Fr Isaac;

Greetings from your fallen yobson Benjamin the younger.

I truly thank God for your mercy in allowing me to still have conversation with you.

Thank you for not despising me, even though you probably should.

P. 2  
The knowledge that I received from the monastery and especially from the sermons will never be taken away from me and as I feel in my gut, will go on with me forever. I am a marked ~~man~~<sup>man</sup>, eternally branded with the seal of Christ.

P. 3  
\* There is and always will be a sure, a feeling or a presence if you will, of being

Constantly and invisibly reminded of who you really are, an eternal servant of Christ.

I tried my best to ignore this presence and to fight it with all of my ego. I tried driving it away with sins to vast to count. Still this presence would not leave me it will only torment me with its reminders.

There was a period about ~~a month~~ <sup>a month</sup> or so, long that I really started to hate this annoying presence, and everything to do with it. I hated the monastery for this situation I was in, I really hated the Saviour.

After awhile I slowly came to my senses and realized that it was this same denial and hatred of the truth, this stopping up of one's spiritual ears, that caused the other Fathers who had left years ago to try to destroy the monastery.

This annoying presence is the light of Christ and he is still trying to shine into ~~my~~ <sup>mine</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~their~~ <sup>theirs</sup> fallen ~~hearts~~ <sup>hearts</sup>.

I truly believe that these fallen Fathers thought by ~~so~~ destroying the monastery, the root cause of this light in their lives, they could get rid of every hinderance to their (temporal) happy kingdom.

What was this feeling of hatred being entertained by us fallen Fathers? Is it not the same exact hatred the Devil feels toward God, is it not

the same feeling he has for trying to destroy the ~~Church~~ Church and Christ. This presence is the same presence of Love that constantly burns the Devil by always reminding him of who he really is - an angel of eternal light.

All this presence of Love is asking is to surrender to it. To be obedient to the Church, but alas, only a fool like me derides him when he descends to bestow his mercies.

There in the monastery the Fathers are very fortunate, They walk in the light. whether they realize it or not. There in the monastery you can see Christ, you can touch him, hear him. feel him in the most mystic way. Out here in the world, even though it is his creation, he is very hard to be found.

p. 5

On occasion I used to feel locked up in the monastery and would disrupt myself and others in various ways. "When falling why not grab some-one else along the way says the clerk". Because of my sins the Holy Spirit allowed me to leave, and now I am in a real prison, the prison of this dark world. I keep going from one cell (false vain activities) to another. I'm in this cell and that cell, no matter where you go or what you do one cannot be happy so long as he is within prison walls.

Wouldn't it be happy and intelligent to ask the King of all creation for his mercy and pardon to return back home to his Father's land where life is truly free. Alas, a man who has been put into prison cannot get out without the intercession of the friends of the Supreme Authority and King. So I plead with heart felt longing to the friends of the King for my pardon and return home.

"If thou see'st a man who hath fallen into a ditch, and thou can'st help him, stretch out thy staff to him and draw him in. . . ."

Please forgive my emotion, but I'm scared and have had enough of this mess I'm in.

Material comfort means nothing if you know where true happiness comes from.

I'm not asking that you carry me all the way home to Christ. I know the burden of my foolishness and sins would be too heavy. I do beg you though, to guide me with your staff of hope and love.

You have many sheep and one has gone astray,  
You have many silver coins and one is lost.

Please come and seek me out, I'm lost  
and my soul lays wounded by the wayside.

I love you all,

The younger one.

For Benjamin

P.S. Most of these thoughts  
are from your sermons.  
You taped them on my  
mind and heart.

Lord have mercy.