

Bishop Hilarion of Manhattan, Deputy Secretary

March 18/31, 1986

Dear Father Nektas,

At its meeting in New York City this year during the latter part of January the Council of Bishops of our Church discussed an article published recently in the "Orthodox Christian Witness", which attacks the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church and which has prompted an expression of grave concern on the part of the Church of Serbia. I have been directed to inform you of the feelings of our hierarchy on this matter.

Our higher Church administration has already had occasion (on September 11, 1981 and February 5, 1985) to point out to you that the highly polemical and negative tone of many of the articles which you publish in your widely-circulated parish bulletin frequently evokes waves of agitation and misunderstanding among our faithful, especially among the many neophytes in our Church. In this way you scandalize the "little ones" and cause grief to the hierarchy which gave you shelter and placed you under its omophorion, and which remains unchanged and unswerving in its faithfulness to a pure confession of the Holy Orthodox Faith.

Your present article on the Serbian Church is a case in point. You assigned to yourself the position of judge and arbiter of a difficult Church question without first consulting your local bishop on this matter. If you had reason to question the stand of our Church on any given ecclesiastical issue or found that some other related matter perplexed you, you should have turned to your diocesan bishop for elucidation and guidance. Thus, you sinned in publicizing your disagreement with Church policy without first asking for an explanation.

Our bishops cannot but maintain a feeling of gratitude and love for the Church of Serbia which in difficult times gave our Church shelter and protection. Now, in the face of persecution and under most trying circumstances, the Serbian hierarchs are courageously struggling for the rights of the Church and for the future of its flock. We must not forget how difficult their struggle is and that now is not the time to demand absolute infallibility from these valiant strugglers.

Your bulletin, since its inception, has published many valuable articles of a spiritual nature and should continue to provide such beneficial food for the souls of your parishioners and those of other more distant parishes.

We trust that henceforth you will exercise extreme caution in what you print, avoiding zeal not according to reason, and that you will continuously seek the guidance and

direction of your diocesan bishop, His Grace Archbishop Anthony of Western America and San Francisco.

With love in Christ,

+ Bishop Hilarion