

**AN APPEAL TO THE PARISHIONERS OF HOLY RESURRECTION
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, IN WORCESTER,
MASSACHUSETTS**

Feast of Pentecost, 1992

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are taking this opportunity to write to those parishioners of Holy Resurrection Russian Orthodox Church who left the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia as a result of the sad and unfortunate events which took place several years ago, resulting in a separation which is harmful to us all.

We are continually grieved that this separation has taken place, and we ask you to open your hearts and minds, and prayerfully and carefully consider the following:

At the time of the schism, three major issues were put forward by Holy Transfiguration Monastery and its supporters, as justification for departing from that Church which they themselves had until recently described as the "one true vessel of grace," the "one ark of salvation." These issues were as follows:

1) The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia were alleged to have greatly compromised their stand regarding the Moscow Patriarchate. Indeed, the Monastery circulated false rumors to the effect that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was on the verge of uniting with the Moscow Patriarchate, that a great concelebration was being prepared to mark the millenium of Russia's conversion, in 1988, that "secret negotiations" and "high-level discussions" were taking place and had been going on for a long time. Of course, nothing of the sort has ever taken place. In fact, we are being bitterly attacked by the Moscow Patriarchate on several fronts simply because we have spurned their overtures as insincere. Throughout our Church's history our stand has been firm and uncompromising regarding the question of relations with the Moscow Patriarchate, and it continues unchanged to this day. In fact, our Council of Bishops has time after time appealed to the Moscow Patriarchate's hierarchs to renounce their policy of Sergianism and to beg forgiveness of the faithful for compromising the Faith and allowing themselves to be used as tools of the atheistic Soviet government. We likewise insist that they terminate their active participation in the World Council of Churches and involvement in the ecumenical movement. These conditions, as well as the solemn glorification of all the holy new martyrs and confessors of the Church of Russia must be met before our bishops will agree to any negotiations or dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate. Furthermore, we have stated that we will refuse to deal with hierarchs who have shown themselves to be enemies of the Holy Faith by collaborating with the atheists in the destruction of the Church.

2) The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church outside of Russia have been accused by Holy Transfiguration Monastery and its followers of having become ecumenists. Again,

this is patently false. since the onset of the ecumenical mania in the 1960s, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has assiduously avoided and condemned the heresy of ecumenism at every level, including the insertion of an anathema against it in the Rite of Orthodoxy, by which we stand. Yet though we have anathematized ecumenism, our approach has been one of patient love and mercy; we refrain from judging and condemning others harshly, in the prayerful hope that those who have sullied themselves with ecumenism will come to their senses, repent and embrace the truth of Orthodoxy wholeheartedly. For this, the bishops of our Church are criticized as being weak and "ecumenical," when in fact we are relying on the passage of time to confirm the judgment of God and our Church, Metropolitan Vitaly, the present first hierarch of our Church, is absolutely firm in maintaining our stand, just as was Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory. The other Orthodox Churches have experienced some startling changes in the years since the repose of Metropolitan Philaret, but the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia has continued on the narrow path of true Orthodoxy.

3) The bishops of our Church are also accused of having treated Father Panteleimon and the other clergy of Holy Transfiguration Monastery unjustly after canonical charges were brought against them. At that time, the Council of Bishops received as many as seven formal complaints against Father Panteleimon. These ugly charges caused the bishops much personal sorrow, and it was with considerable pain, yet with concern for the integrity of the Church, that, after long deliberation, they concluded that the charges were serious enough to merit a full investigation. But before the investigation could be conducted, Father Panteleimon and his monastery, as well as several clergy and parishes went into schism, preferring this drastic and terrible course of action rather than permit an investigation which would surely have revealed the charges as groundless were Father Panteleimon innocent of the sins of which he was accused. To this day, even though people within the Monastery's new jurisdiction have asked that the matter be thoroughly investigated and publicly clarified by impartial judges, no such investigation has been permitted to take place.¹ In the last six months, five more people of good reputation and Christian character have come forward with similar charges against Father Panteleimon.²

¹ This is not true. The Auxentian Synod did investigate in May of 1988 and dismissed the charges. See the [1988 decision of the Auxentian on Holy Transfiguration Monastery](#).

² Bishop Hilarion is not being truthful here. Only four fathers left the monastery in 1991, not five as he claims. Also, only three of these fathers made accusations. All three of these fathers who made accusations had written letters defending Fr. Panteleimon and the monastery in 1986. Two of the fathers had left the monastery in 1990, and then begged, in writing, to be received back into the brotherhood. One of these two fathers that left and begged to be received back was Fr. Benjamin (see [letters of Fr. Benjamin](#)), whose letter is quoted by Bishop Ephraim (see [letter of Bishop Ephraim, 1992](#)) in the letter to the flock written in February of 1992. Also, two of the fathers that left and made accusations were under ban from receiving the Holy Mysteries at the time they left because it was discovered they were doing things totally antithetical to Christian morality, let alone behavior appropriate to monastics. (See [Abbot Isaac's affidavit, 1991](#)) Two of our parishioners made signed statements that two of the fathers had told them after their second departure from the monastery that they had seen nothing out of order during the years they lived at the monastery. (See [affidavits, 1992](#)) One of the four fathers that left made two signed statements that he had no complaints about immorality at Holy Transfiguration Monastery. (see [affidavits, 1992](#)) The third father who made accusations bragged to other monks in the community that he lied during Holy Confession. (See [Abbot Isaac's affidavit, 1991](#)) Of what value are the testimonies of witnesses who are show to be perjurers

Again, the passage of time has justified our bishop's prudence in their handling of this case. While they have felt compelled to remove Father Panteleimon and the clergy associated with him from the ranks of the clergy, the bishops have left the door open for the penitent to return.

Beloved brothers and sisters! For the sake of Christ and for your salvation, do not ignore our appeal! These are the facts. We have no interest in misleading you. Please give them careful consideration. Schism is a heinous sin, yet God's mercy and love are infinite. Look into your hearts and souls, and ask yourself if you are truly content and secure with your present spiritual and ecclesiastical situation. If you are not, know that we long for your return to the safe haven of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, to its grace-filled life. We assure you that we have not compromised our traditional positions; we remain the very same Church which was organized under Metropolitan Anthony, and was lovingly nurtured by Metropolitans Anastassy and Philaret: the same Church under which your parish was founded.

If there is any aspect of our Church's stand you would like to discuss, or if you have any question which troubles you, please be assured that we are anxious to hear from you. Feel free to contact me, or Peter Chaplain, who, with Elizabeth Chisholm and others, recently withdrew from your parish and returned to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Bishop Hilarion

by their own letters and the witness of many people? The Holy Canons say such testimony is invalid. Bishop Hilarion's statement, "In the last six months, five more people of good reputation and Christian character have come forward with similar charges against Father Panteleimon," is highly debatable, to say the least.