

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Many of you may have received in the mail packets of materials of an inflammatory and slanderous nature directed against our monastery. This campaign occurred once before under the auspices of the Russian Church Abroad, and is occurring again, but this time directed against our diocese as well, with the support of individuals who are of one mind with the above-mentioned Russian jurisdiction.

Regarding the campaign against the monastery in particular, we believe the excerpt below from a letter written by a monk who left the monastery (and then begged to be allowed to return again, and then left again), speaks eloquently concerning the motives of "witnesses" who have not remained faithful to their monastic vows and who are also not considered trustworthy by the holy canons of the Orthodox Church. This letter was written by Fr. Benjamin (in the world, George Ellis) on November 25, 1989, some four months after he left the monastery the first time:

There is and always will be, I'm 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 too vast to count. Still, this presence would not leave me; it will only torment me with reminders.

There was a period about a month or so [ago], 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 a while, 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 our fallen hearts.

I truly believe that these fallen Fathers thought [that] by destroying the monastery, the root cause of this light in their lives, they could get rid of any 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 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 [for us] 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 mercy.

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 ways. Out here in the world, even though it is His creation, He is very hard to be found.

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 someone else along the way," says the devil.

In the Lives of the Saints, one will find many accounts of monastic fathers, both in the East and in the West, who had disciples who reached such a pitch of malice and anger against their spiritual superiors, they even tried to murder them. Many examples exist, also, of disciples -- sometimes numbering in the scores -- who grouped together in a conspiracy in order to defame and malign their spiritual directors. Such campaigns have occurred in the past and, undoubtedly, will occur so long as this world and the life of spiritual warfare exists.

Notwithstanding the false testimony and the fabrications of those who wage the present campaign, our monastery and its spiritual directors have never in the past or present condoned any form of carnal sin, of either the homosexual or heterosexual type. Such a lifestyle is in direct contradiction to the commandments of God, and is completely at variance with the monastic disciplines of self-denial, fasting, attendance at long vigil services, prostrations, and the life of "the daily cross" that all monastics are expected to take upon their shoulders, and which, weak though we be, we also strive to do.

Those who love us and know us, know this. Those who do not love us or know us will, of course, believe whatever they wish. But this will not alter our dedication to the pure and undefiled Orthodox Christian Faith and the life of chastity, as set forth so clearly in the Sacred Scriptures and teachings of the Saints of all ages past.

Glory be to God for all things.

February, 1992

Holy Transfiguration Monastery