Archpriest Peter PEREKRESTOV

"The Church's Helmsman, both then and now, is the almighty Spirit of God

25 questions regarding the process of re-establishing the unity of the Russian Church, the IV All-Diaspora Council, ecumenism, and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.

The following article came out of a desire to explain to those with questions about the currently unfolding process of healing the division between the two parts of the Russian Church – in Russia and abroad. Many of the subjects touched upon in this article, especially those in the realm of ecclesiology and canon law, are not simple ones. For that reason, a question-and-answer format was chosen as the format most accessible. We will attempt to answer the questions clearly and concisely in a manner comprehensible to the reader.

1. Why is the question of uniting the two parts of the Russian Church so urgent? Why can't everything be left as is?

The life of the Church is guided by the Gospels and by the Church Canons, according to which a Church cannot declare itself to be independent, autonomous, or autocephalous. In its organization and structure, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia follows the Holy Canons. The canonical foundation for the Russian Church Outside of Russia is Patriarch St. Tikhon's *Ukaz* № 362 dated November 7/20, 1920. That *Ukaz* provides, in pertinent part:

> "[2] In the event a diocese, in consequence of the movement of the war front, changes of state borders, etc., finds itself completely out of contact with the Higher Church Administration, or if the Higher Church Administration itself, headed by His Holiness the Patriarch, for any reason whatsoever ceases its activity, the diocesan bishop immediately enters into relations with the bishops of neighboring dioceses for the purpose of organizing a higher instance of ecclesiastical authority for several dioceses in similar conditions (in the form either of a temporary Higher Church government or a Metropolitan district, or anything else)".
>
> "[10] All measures taken in places in accordance with the present instruction, afterwards, in the event of the restoration of the central ecclesiastical authority, must be subject to the confirmation of the latter."

It was on the basis of that *Ukaz*, that "The Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia," were developed. The first paragraph thereof provides:

> "The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad is an indissoluble part of the Russian Orthodox Church, and **for the time** [in all quotations, emphasis provided by bold typeface is mine – *Archpriest P.*] until the extermination in Russia of the atheist government, is self-governing on conciliar principles in accordance with the resolution of the Patriarch, the Most Holy Synod, and the Highest Church Council [Sobor] of the Russian Church dated 7/20 November, 1920, No. 362."

The Encyclical Epistle of the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

of 1933, a document, which one may say, is the primary and fundamental document in outlining the interrelationships between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, speaks of the fact that "the organs of the ecclesiastical administration abroad have in nowise striven to appropriate the rights of autocephaly for itself, as Metropolitan Sergius accuses us. To the present day the entire Church organization abroad has considered and still considers itself an **extraordinary** and **temporary** institution, **which must be abolished without delay** after the restoration of normal social and ecclesiastical life in Russia."

Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, our respected theologian and ever-memorable teacher of dogmatic theology at the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, wrote about the fact that the time would come to unite the two parts of the Russian Church:

"The Orthodox Church is Christ's legacy. The Lord also preserves the little Church vessel known as the Church Abroad, the external offshoot that in the past sprang from the majestic Russian Church. When the Church in the Homeland is reborn, **then that part of it which is free will also return to its bosom.**" *("Sobornost' and Religious Collaboration,"* Regarding Life, the Faith, and the Church*, Jordanville, 1976, p. 218).*

It has been 15 years since normal church life was restored in Russia. Fifteen years ago, it became possible to restore direct contacts with the central ecclesiastical authority in Russia. The atheist regime has been officially abolished for over 15 years Thus, if we consider *Ukaz* № 362 to be the canonical foundation for our Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, and if we are governed by our "Regulations," we are obliged to establish contact with the supreme ecclesiastical authority in Russia, i.e. with the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate.

2. I cannot understand why we need to go through the formalities, if, as a practical matter, unification has already taken place. Immigrants from Russia attend churches of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and are accepted by them as parishioners. We could intercommune and support one another without a formal unification.

Informal prayerful, and even – on the lay level – eucharistic communion, is one thing. Quite another matter is Church organization on canonical foundations. From a purely technical standpoint, if bishops of the Church Abroad cannot concelebrate and commune together with bishops and clergy of the Church in Russia, Moscow Patriarchate, and if our clergy cannot concelebrate with bishops and clergy in Russia, then can the laity do that? Actually, no. Yes, in practice, lay people do commune on a regular basis, but why can only they do so, while the bishops and clergy cannot? This requires a "formal," or, more accurately, ecclesiastical unity, attainable only on a canonical level.

To some extent it is understandable that it is easier to live free of anyone or anything, including the canons. However, that is a purely secular, and not an ecclesiastical-canonical approach to freedom.

3. Why is there such a rush to unite?

At every Liturgy, following the singing of "It is truly meet" after the Eucharistic Canon, we commemorate our ecclesiastical authorities. That commemoration defines who we are, and begins with the words, "**Among the first, remember** O Lord..." Whom do we commemorate **first**, who is **first** for us, who is the head of our Church Abroad? We are required to first commemorate the "Orthodox episcopate of the Russian Church," and **only after that, in second place**, "our lord the Very-most-reverend Metropolitan Laurus." (After the death of Metropolitan Peter of Krutitsa, the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia decided to commemorate Metropolitan Kyrill of Kazan. As he was in difficult circumstances, and to avoid worsening those difficulties for him, it was decided to employ a form of commemoration allowing for "anonymity," i.e. the "the Orthodox episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church." It was understood that behind the anonymous "episcopate of the persecuted Russian Church" there stood a concrete, specific individual – Metropolitan Kyrill). Who, now, is the "Orthodox episcopate of the Russian Church" which we commemorate every day, at every service? Are they bishops in Russia? If so, which ones, and what are their names? Are they cat-

acomb bishops? If so, over the course of 15 years, we could have made contact with them and ascertained the identity of their first-hierarch. Are they the bishops presiding over the Russian parishes of the Church Abroad in Russia? Why, then, are they commemorated before our First-hierarch, Metropolitan Laurus; are they in charge of our Church Abroad? Are they the present bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate? If so, why not openly say so?

The well-known 34th Apostolic Canon, which in his spiritual will, the Blessed Metropolitan Anastassy called "the cornerstone" and which so profoundly and clearly expresses the spirit of conciliar governance in the Church, directs:

> "The bishops of every nation must acknowledge him who is first among them and account him as their head, and do nothing of consequence without his consent".

The Orthodox Church has no anonymous, generalized, formulae for commemorating ecclesiastical authorities. Our present crisis rests precisely in the fact that we commemorate as **first** "the Orthodox episcopate of the Russian Church", and **do not know** who that is. Without knowing that, we are incapable of knowing **who we are**. As long as there was an iron curtain between us and the Church in Russia, we could somehow justify the anonymous formula on the grounds that we did not have reliable information about church life in Russia and that there was no opportunity to personally be sure of what was transpiring there, either in the official Church or in the Catacombs. Now, however, when we have opportunities to travel to Russia, to establish contacts with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, and with the various groups that call themselves "those in the catacombs," when we likewise can acquaint ourselves with documents heretofore unknown to us, documents in archives that previously had been inaccessible, we have no more justification for, and must seek a way out of, our former, temporary state, and to **know** whom we concretely commemorate as **first**.

So as not to usurp ecclesiastical authority and thereby cease being a part of the Local Russian Church, not a single First-hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad had ever dared discontinue commemoration of the "Orthodox episcopate of the Russian Church," which is commemorated first, before the name of the Metropolitan of the Russian Church Abroad.

People in our Church, especially bishops and clergy who are well-versed in canonical matters, understand that the Russian Church Abroad is on the brink of a canonical catastrophe. One may compare the Church to a family, the family of Christ, or according to St. John Chrysostom, the "family of the Only-begotten." If the children of one single family bicker among themselves and are not talking to one another, do they not thereby destroy the family entrusted to them by their parents? If there is no unity within the Local Church or among the Local Churches, can one even speak of One Church? The unity of the Church is not something secondary; it is the very essence of the life of the Church. The Church is one, for the Lord and Savior of all is One. The Church Canons, and canonical status, are the very laws, the "blood ties" which define the interrelationship and responsibilities of the "family of the Only-begotten." The Canons ensure legitimate, God-established, apostolic succession. Everyone who believes in Christ and the Kingdom of God which He promised us must be in liturgical and canonical unity with the entire Orthodox Church. Canonical status (including, in part, commemoration of the "first" bishop) determines our belonging to our Russian Church and to the entire Orthodox Church, the "family of the Only-begotten." If the question of our canonical status is not settled now, we will have no status, something that for the Orthodox Church is impermissible.

4. The flock is not ready for unification. Can't we slow it down?

Sixteen years have elapsed since the government in Russia ceased to be an atheistic one. Six years have elapsed since the Council of Bishops under the direction of Metropolitan Vitaly established the "Commission for unification," and three years since its replacement, the "Commissions for dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate" began its work. That Commission,

appointed by the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in 2003, was given the following goal: "The establishment of normal relations with the Moscow Patriarchate" *(Ukaz of the Council of Bishops № 11-35-16)*. The Commission accomplished a great deal of work and worthily represented our Church Abroad.

By now, parishioners of the Russian Church Abroad have more or less determined their attitude toward the current unification process. Unfortunately, there is not complete oneness of mind with respect to this question, just as there had not been complete oneness of mind, even among the members of our episcopate, on the question of canonization of the holy New Martyrs of Russia, and especially with respect to the place of the Royal Passion-bearers among the ranks of New Martyrs. Within the circles of those who quite actively and irreconcilably oppose the current process of unification, we do not see a process of comprehension, maturity, understanding of our situation and, it seems to us, no timeframes will help in that regard. As soon as the Church in Russia meets one demand (for example, refusal to engage in common prayer with the heterodox, and condemnation of the ecumenical "branch theory"), these people put forth new demands (e.g. cessation of all discussions with the heterodox, and immediate withdrawal from the WCC). Such people, as Archpriest Pimen Simon noted at the IV All-Diaspora Council, resemble Old Believers.

Only personal experience, living encounters with contemporary Orthodox Rus', can soften these people's hearts and allow them to see what is joyous and bright, what gives reason for hope in Russia's religious life.

In the years we spent studying in Holy Trinity Seminary, we seminarians were told that the barometer of religious life was monasticism: wherever monasticism flourished, there religious life was healthy. In the 15 years that Alexey II has been Patriarch, the number of monasteries in Russia has increased **by a factor of 30** – from 21 monasteries to over 600! In Russia there are **twice** as many monasteries as there are **parishes** in the Russian Church Abroad!

The multitude of appeals and letters from diocesan meetings, councils, parishes and religious organizations sent to the First-hierarch of the Russian Church Outside of Russia, at least during the past month, evidence the fact that the vast majority of the faithful of our Church not only personally support Vladyka Metropolitan Laurus, but also that they wish to have Russian Orthodox Church unity.

It seems to us that not one of the opponents – either in the Diaspora or in Russia – of the glorification of the New Martyrs, can now fail to admit that the matter of their glorification was a work of great importance. The same applies to the question of religious unity. Several years from now, all of the true sons of the Russian Church will come to recognize that the matter of Church unity is a Godly matter, a matter of historical significance.

5. Why are parishioners' rights being limited? Why is such an important decision being made exclusively by the bishops?

Such is the nature of the Orthodox Church: decisions as to the direction of Church life are made by the hierarchs, to whom at the time of their consecration was given the grace to "rightly divide the word of Truth." Holy Hierarch John wrote the following on the subject:

> "The Church of Christ is a divine institution, and the basis of its organization are given by Christ and the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles and holy men. The development of religious regulations, and direction of the Church, was assigned to the Bishops, as we see from the Epistles of the Apostles and their most immediate successors....
>
> Rule by the people is something alien to the Orthodox Church. In the Church of Christ, everything flows from a Divine origin, and God is given a final accounting of all [our] works. For that reason, the bishops, as heirs of the Apostles, stand at the head of the Church authorities." *(from Archbishop John's appeal to the general meeting of the parish in 1966., "Homilies," Russkiy Pastyr, San Francisco, 1994, p.307)*

However, despite this, our First-hierarch, Metropolitan Laurus, convened the IV All-Diaspora Council, so that representatives of all dioceses might

express the opinions of their brethren and parishioners with respect to the rapprochement between the two parts of the Russian Church, and so that the Hierarchs might be able to hear the opinions of their clergy and their flocks.

By the way, when the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia held in 1927 decided on 27 August/9 September to break relations with the Moscow ecclesiastical authority, and to become self-administering (note, we are not aware of a single conciliar church document that speaks of a break in **eucharistic communion** with the Church in Russia), neither the clergy of the Russian Church Abroad nor its parishioners were polled, nor was an All-Diaspora Council convened to consider such an important question.

6. Was there dissension at the IV All-Diaspora Council?

During the opening days of the IV All-Diaspora Council, a great many varied, and sometimes, irreconcilable opinions were expressed. The third working day of the Council was the most intense, but on the fourth day, when the Resolution was under consideration, the situation changed. The delegates began to pay more attention to one another, to propose constructive, practical suggestions, and to strive for oneness of heart, and there took place what many of them later called a miracle – the working of the Holy Spirit. The resolution was adopted almost unanimously. Less than 3 per cent of the participants spoke out against any of the paragraphs of the Resolution. The first paragraph, regarding complete trust in and support for the First-hierarch and the Council of Bishops in the matter of deciding the question of time frames and conditions for the process toward achieving Church unity, was adopted by 100% of the delegates.

7. Why was the voting at the IV All-Diaspora Council not by secret ballot, as it was at the III All-Diaspora Council?

None of the participants in the III All-Diaspora Council whom we questioned affirmed that at the III All-Diaspora Council voting was by secret ballot. The minutes of the III All-Diaspora Council did not include a single mention of secret balloting. Practically all of the resolutions were adopted, one after another, on the same day, and almost unanimously.

In San Francisco, the Organizing Committee prepared voting cards to be used for secret balloting, but they turned out to be unnecessary for three reasons:

a) No delegate asked that the voting be secret, and no delegate objected to the order of voting proposed by the Most-reverend Archbishop Hilarion, head of the Editorial Committee.

b) The show of hands made it absolutely clear that the vast majority was for the proposed Resolution. For all practical purposes, the Resolution was adopted unanimously.

c) The Vote Tallying Committee, consisting of Priest Vladimir Petrenko (a delegate from the South American Diocese), Protodeacon Andre Meillassoux (Western European Diocese) and Alexander Ivanovitch Mutilin (Odessa Diocese), found the order of voting consistent with the conciliar process. The Vote Tallying Committee took note of who raised their hands, and they tallied the votes. Upon completion of the voting, the Vote Tallying Committee turned the voting results over the Council Secretariat.

8. Why was only four minutes allotted to each speaker at the IV All-Diaspora Council?

In accordance with the instructions to the III All-Diaspora Council, at that Council, time limitations of 10 minutes were imposed. Moreover, according to the minutes of the III Council, Archbishop Nikon more than once “closed debate,” i.e. would not allow discussion to continue. Also, Metropolitan Laurus, secretary of the III All-Diaspora Council, and a series of participants (both clergy and laity) whom we specifically questioned as to the time allotted for speakers, confirmed that at the III All-Diaspora Council time limits were imposed.

The III All-Diaspora Council had 9 working days, and the number of delegates at the sessions did not exceed 90 individuals (there was one day in which fewer than 80 were present). Moreover, that Council

was not convened to consider any one specific sharply-pressing question.

In duration, the IV All-Diaspora Council was almost half as short, and every day there were up to 40 more participants than at the III All-Diaspora Council. It was convened to consider one principal question – the further canonical existence of the Russian Church. The Organizers of the IV Council had to so organize the presentations as to allow **each delegate** an opportunity to speak his mind. On the second and third days of the Council, there were over 130 presentations from the floor! 130 x 4 minutes = 520 minutes = **almost 9 hours of uninterrupted speech** – and that does not take into account responses made by lecturers and committee members to those speaking from the floor! Thus, the imposition of time limits for comments was done out of organizational necessity. Nonetheless, everyone who wanted to had the opportunity to briefly and concretely express his point of view or to present comments in written form to the Secretariat.

9. It is our understanding that unification can happen only at a Local Council; is that not so?

The Blessed Metropolitan Anastassy wrote about the fact that the unity of the Russian Church would be re-established at a free Council of the Russian Church, and Holy Hierarch St. John (Maximovitch) referred to a Local Council: "...the entire Church Abroad, all together, must present to the All-Russian Council with what it had done during its time of forced separation." *("To the Orthodox flock of Shanghai, grace and peace from the Life-giving Trinity!," Shanghai, August 2, 1946)*. In that paragraph, the Holy Hierarch emphasized that the Russian Church Outside of Russia must give an account of its activities to the Church in Russia, and not vice versa.

The current process toward unification appears to be the middle, Royal, path. On the one hand, both parts of the Russian Church, in Russia and Abroad, are presenting an account to one another (rather than one side giving its account to the other) and are seeking that common ground upon which Church unity may be built. On the other hand, a Local Council in which both parts of the Russian Church can participate is possible only if there they share eucharistic communion. The Church in Russia would hardly invite to a Local Council it had convened, those who are in opposition to, and do not recognize it. When the two parts of the Russian Church share Eucharistic Communion, the part Abroad will be able to participate in the convocation of a Local Council and in the formulation of its agenda.

10. What is the "Mother Church?"

The following definition was given at the IV All-Diaspora Council: The Mother Church is the Church of the New Martyrs, of the Local Council, and of Holy Russia.

11. Our Church Abroad did not recognize the election of the Patriarchs in Russia, including the election of Patriarch Alexey II. Have those decisions been rescinded?

A similar question was considered at the IV All-Diaspora Council, and in part, some delegates, specialists in the history of the Russian Church Abroad and canon law, offered the following conclusions.

Our non-recognition of the "patriarchate" of patriarchs of the Church in Russia is tied to the fact that we are not under their jurisdiction, in light of our temporarily independent existence, in accordance with *Ukaz* № 362. Our hierarchs were not, and currently are not, members of their Council of Bishops. Were our hierarchs to be part of their Council, their first bishop, i.e. the Patriarch, would, in accordance with Apostolic Canon 34 and Canon 9 of the Council at Antioch, solicit the opinions of our hierarchs with respect to all important Church questions.

Non-recognition of the canonicity of the elections of the patriarch meant that he could not extend his authority over us. The denial of the canonicity of the election of Patriarch Alexey II in 1991 was a defensive measure. The Church Abroad recognized all of the patriarchs of the official Church in Russia as heads of the part of the Church that remained under them; however, retaining its own freedom, it did not submit itself to the patriarchs. With the adoption of the "Act of Eucharistic Communion," our relation-

ship to the Patriarch changes: All hierarchs of both parts of the Russian Church, those in Russia and Abroad, become part of the Council of Bishops of the **Local** Russian Church, and the hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad are consulted on all important issues of the Russian Church. Upon adoption of the "Act," Apostolic Canon 34 and Canon 9 of the Council at Antioch will also be extended to apply to us. Both parts of the Russian Church enter into eucharistic and canonical communion, thereby re-establishing the desired unity.

12. How can we commemorate the Patriarch, a former "agent of the KGB"?

In actual fact, during the Soviet years, some hierarchs of the Church in Russia made certain compromises. That is no secret, just as it is no secret that when the Apostle Paul was still Saul, he was a fierce persecutor of Christians.

However, Archimandrite Justin (Popovic) wrote that we Orthodox Christians are true disciples of Christ not in that we have fewer sins than other people and nations, but in that we have faith, **repentance** and humility before the God-man, the only One who did not sin, and Who was without sin. That path of repentance is open to all without exception. According to St. John the Baptist, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance," i.e. one must repent not in words but in deeds.

Patriarch Alexey has brought repentance – serving the Liturgy almost daily (more than 300 times per year!), he prays for forgiveness of his sins and those of his flock. For His Holiness Patriarch Alexey, prayer is the main thing in carrying his Cross as Primate of the Church. This is supported by his own words, "I strive to serve the Liturgy as much as possible, and in the Church Mysteries, Divine grace supplements, fills in, and strengthens [my] weak human powers," *(from an interview in the magazine Vstrecha [Encounter], №19, 1/2005)*. During his Primacy, **three new churches** are opened **every day**! Unquestionably, he takes care to further Orthodox education and to do battle with Russia's growing propaganda for immorality. He has the trust and love of his clergy and people throughout all Russia. Can we deny that these are the fruits of repentance?

It would be appropriate to cite an excerpt from a resolution made by the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on August 12/25, 1981, regarding the difficulty of assessing Church life in Soviet Russia. The resolution was made in connection with the publication in a certain Orthodox magazine of a letter from Metropolitan Philaret (Voznesensky) regarding the activities of Archimandrite Tavrion, a clergyman of the Moscow Patriarchate. In his letter, Vladyka Philaret noted sympathetically that at first Fr. Tavrion was in the Catacomb Church, but later, for pastoral reasons, openly served in the official Church, in the Moscow Patriarchate. The publication of Metropolitan Philaret's letter provoked indignation and criticism by zealots, especially those in the camp of the Boston "Panteleimonite" sect. In that regard, the Synod of Bishops resolved:

> "The Synod of Bishops deems it necessary to remind its flock that first of all, we must strongly uphold our own faith and exercise our zeal in the authentic life of the Church under the conditions in which God has placed each one of us, striving towards the salvation of our souls. Due to **insufficient information**, deliberations about the significance and quality of various events in Russia do not at present provide adequate guidance for the faithful. Indeed, in the majority of cases these deliberations cannot serve as instruction but must rather be regarded as personal opinions... Mutual love and concern for Church unity, which is especially necessary in times of heresy and schism, require from each of us great caution in what we say...
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> The situation of the Church in Russia **is without precedent**, and no norms can be prescribed by any one of us separately."

13. Yes, that's fine, but why to date has Patriarch Alexey not offered words of repentance, openly and publicly?

Patriarch Alexey had publicly repented in the press, in an announcement published in 1991 regarding Metropolitan Sergius' Declaration. Unfortunately, his announcement was not aired in

the religious press of the Church Abroad. It was first publicly announced 12 years later (!), at the Pastoral Conference in 2003 in Nyack, and then at the IV All-Diaspora Council in San Francisco. For that reason, we cite his words here:

> "That declaration is part of the history of our Church. As a person of the Church, I must take upon myself responsibility for everything that happened in the life of my Church: not only the good, but that which was difficult, lamentable, and erroneous. It would be too simple to say, 'I did not sign it and don't know anything...'
>
> Today we are able to say that **untruth** was mixed in his [Metropolitan Sergius'] Declaration...
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> Defending one thing, he had to make compromises in something else. Were there other organizations or other people among those who had to bear responsibility not only for themselves but for the fate of thousands of others, who in those years in the Soviet Union did not have to proceed in like manner? It is not only before God, but also before all of those people to whom the compromises, silence, forced passivity or expressions of loyalty that the Church leadership allowed themselves to make in those years brought pain that **I ask forgiveness**, understanding and prayers." *(Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, № 10, 1991).*

14. Before, there was a negative attitude of mistrust toward the hierarchs of the Moscow Patriarchate, including toward Metropolitan Kyrill of Smolensk, and now the attitude toward them has turned in a more positive direction. Why has there been such a shift?

When you are talking about the episcopate of the Church in Russia today, you must bear in mind that the majority were chosen and consecrated after the fall of the atheist regime.

Many representatives of the Russian Church Abroad formed a negative attitude toward Metropolitan Kyrill, primarily on the basis of some of his early pronouncements and also negative articles about him in the secular press.

However, Metropolitan Kyrill himself has experienced a certain disenchantment with the ecumenical movement and has demonstrated a shift in emphasis in his activities. As to press notices Archpriest Nikolai Artemov noted at the IV All-Diaspora Council that he used to read a variety of critical articles about Metropolitan Kyrill (Gundyayev). However, when he began to receive similar articles about a hierarch of the Church Abroad whom he knew well, he changed his attitude toward such publications.

In 2004 members of the delegation from the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia had the opportunity to meet face to face with Metropolitan Kyrill and to candidly ask him a series of questions. After their personal encounter with Metropolitan Kyrill, the delegates were convinced as to his sincerity and candor, his devotion to the Russian Church, the breadth of his knowledge, and his opinions; likewise, they were persuaded of the sincerity of his battle with the secular West in defense of Orthodox values. (Those who would like to better acquaint themselves with Vladyka Kyrill's pronouncements may read them on the Internet:

Regarding secular liberal values:

http://www.smolenskeparxi.ru/index.php?d=8&x=060405izvestiya.

How charity brings us closer together:

http://www.smolenskeparxi.ru/index.php?d=8&x=23nov03_kcxc.

Regarding human rights and their moral foundations:

http://www.smolenskeparxi.ru/index.php?d=8&x=061030a .)

15. Our fathers and grandfathers suffered at the hands of the communists. How can we now unite with such people?

It was not only the fathers and grandfathers of those who went abroad that suffered at the hands of the communists. Almost every family, abroad and in the Soviet Union, suffered at the hands of the communists. By way of example, we mention the Pravdoliubovs, a priestly family from the Ryazan Diocese (there were priests in their family over the course of 300 years). Here is what Archpriest Sergei Pravdoliubov writes about his ancestors:

"When the awful persecutions and active victimization of clergy began, our relatives, as chosen warriors of the Heavenly Kingdom, followed after Christ unto death. On my father's side, my great-grandfather, Archpriest Anatoly Pravdoliubov, was executed by firing squad on December 23, 1937. Three of his sons, two priests and one layperson, also gave up their lives for Christ. In the year 2000, they were glorified as New Martyrs. As a youth, my father was made worthy to endure five years of incarceration in the Solovketsky camp of special purpose and on the mainland. On my mother's side, my grandfather, Archpriest Michael Dmitrev, was executed by firing squad on December 2, 1937, in the city of Ryazan. His nephew, Yevgeny Dmitrev, perished in the city of Perm. They were also glorified as saints in the year 2000. In addition to our closest relatives, another five of our relatives – priests and laity – suffered for the Faith. In all, they were 11 saints, now glorified by the Holy Church! Need I describe our family's attitude toward the spiritual struggle of the martyrs and toward service to the Church?! The entire history of the XX century 'by word of mouth,' tales of our great-grandparents and grandparents, brought everything, including events in the past, to life for us. Thus, the "[length of] our Church life" and the transmittal of oral tradition extends in direct succession from the mid XIX century."

Further, Fr. Sergei tells of his own life:

"God blessed me to live through the entire second half of the XX century in peace and prosperity. But we never forgot the suffering of the martyrs – our ancestors and fathers. We lived with an indissoluble connection to them. My father's stories about Solovki and the Solovki Islands themselves did not retreat as I grew older; they came ever closer. From my earliest youth, I was able to avoid joining the October Movement, and the Pioneer and Komsomol [Young Communist] organizations. There were difficult situations, and there were even little sufferings for Christ, when my school peers – both from 7th grade "A" and 7th grade "B" – would beat me for being the son of a "pope." But that was out of ignorance, out of something general instilled in them by adults. Today I have only the warmest and friendliest of relationships with classmates and co-workers alike." ("Regarding the approaching Council," taken from the website "That with one mind we may confess" http://www.pravos.org).

Can we possibly be "more pure" than these people, greater than they in suffering, and can we possibly not want to be united with them?

16. There are still a lot of communists in the Russian Federation, and many have yet to acknowledge the sin of regicide.

We are less concerned with the communists' attitude toward regicide than with that of the Russian Church and the faithful. On the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the murder of the Royal Family, Patriarch Alexey and the Holy Synod of the ROC-MP addressed the flock with an epistle of repentance. Unfortunately, the Russian Diaspora religious press did not publicize that expression of repentance either:

"The sin of regicide, which took place amid the indifference of the citizens of Russia, has not been repented of by our people. Being a transgression of both the law of God and civil law, this sin weighs extremely heavily upon the souls of our people, upon its moral conscience.

And today, on behalf of the whole Church, on behalf of her children, both reposed and living, we proclaim repentance before God and the people for this sin. **Forgive us, O Lord!**" *(From the Epistle of His Holiness, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Alexey II and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on the 75th anniversary of the murder of Emperor Nicholas II and his family, 1993)*

Some of our parishioners are troubled by the fact that there are still many communists, many people who have "repainted" themselves, in the Russian Federation. Yet, after all, it is not with the current regime that we are uniting, but with the Church in

Russia. The Russian Church was united even during Lenin's fiercely theomachist reign. Why cannot unity exist today?

17. Could it be that the path taken by the Church Abroad, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, was a mistake?

The path taken by the Russian Church Abroad was the path of the Confessors, a glorious and worthy path. We love our Church Abroad, we stand by it, and we treasure and preserve its heritage.

However, at the IV All-Diaspora Council, it was noted *(in Archpriest Nicholas Karipoff's speech entitled "The Spiritual-Historical Heritage of the Russian Church Abroad," Pravoslavnaya Rus' [Orthodox Russia] № 13, July 1/14 2006)*, that:

> "The best of the emigres at first saw their exile as God's punishment for their sins. After the Second World War, however, we see a different perception. Thanksgiving to God for deliverance from the communist hell changes to a sense of chosen-ness: we were saved because we have a special mission. By the second half of the 1960's and further this caused the leadership of the Russian Church Abroad to decide on a change of direction....
>
> The loss of the spirit of repentance of the first decades led to a loss of clarity in self-assessment. Hence we began to perceive ourselves as not only intercessors for the Church of Russia but as having the right to teach others and meddle in the affairs of other Local Churches and to think that perhaps we even constitute the One Catholic Church: we have everything and have no need of anything from without... we are unique."

If we are Orthodox, we must not be afraid of acknowledging our weaknesses, our mistakes; we must not be afraid of the truth, and we must be honest. A certain hierarch of the Russian Church Abroad once stated, "We are not perfect, but we are honest." *(from an interview with Priest Alexis Duncan, in Russky Pastyr [Russian Pastor], №22-23, 1995)*. The fact is that the Church is holy, but that people in the Church are weak and sinful... In seeking to save sinners, the Church Militant on earth does not drive them out from its midst. We must admit and, through the mercy of God, at the IV All-Diaspora Council, did admit, that mistakes were made in the past, and that we now "had to pay" for those mistakes. One example of such mistakes cited at the Council was our taking into the Church Abroad certain Russian parishes. It is possible that our reception of parishes on the territory of Russia was a transitional stage, a bridge between Russians in the West and in Russia. However, on the other hand, Patriarch Tikhon's *Ukaz* № 362 and our own "Regulations" did not allow for establishing dioceses or setting up parishes in Russia. Likewise, they did not allow for interfering in the affairs of the Church of Greece – this is in reference to the consecration, by ROCOR bishops in 1962, of Old-Calendarist Greek bishops. (The Greek Old-Calendarists have now splintered into many microscopic groups recognizing neither one another nor any of the Local Churches, and introducing confusion and embarrassment into Church life. Neither Metropolitan Anastassy nor the Synod of Bishops approved of those consecrations, and it was only in 1969, already under Metropolitan Philaret, that they were confirmed).

The Ever-memorable Archbishop Antony of Geneva used to say that we cannot demand repentance of the Moscow Patriarchate while doing nothing on our part. We must repent as well. In our history there were "wounds" – the Suzdal, Lazarus of Odessa, and the "Panteleimonite" schisms... Of course, we do not have the right to reprove our late hierarchs. They sincerely wished the Church well. However, surely Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) also acted sincerely, with good intentions for the Church. Even those who quite severely condemned his actions did not doubt his sincerity. To cite one example, in an interview broadcast on Radio Radonezh this October, the religious historian Sergius Firsov did not express approval for Metropolitan Sergius' politics, but also had no doubt about his sincerity and his willingness to sacrifice. However, even if one is sincere, mistakes and blunders can happen. The Lord humbles us and brings us to repentance, without which salvation is impossible.

18. We were taught that our Church is "crysal" clear, like unto a glass of pure clean water. If pure water is mixed with dirty water, the pure water becomes murky. Will not the same thing happen to our Church if we enter into communion with the Church in Russia or with the Local Churches that are members of the WCC?

Unfortunately, such pronouncements, to the effect that our Church is crystal-pure while all of the others are muddy water, bring to mind what the Lord warned us about in the parable of the publican and the pharisee. The history of the Church is extremely complex, and one cannot approach it with a black-white, fundamentalist standard of measurement.

Let us turn to one of the most important hierarchs and confessors of the XX century, Holy Hierarch Athanassy (Sakharov), whom the Church in Russia glorified as one of the New Martyrs. In 1954, he had been a bishop for 33 years. In all that time, he served in a diocese for all but 33 months. He spent 32 months in freedom but inactive, and 76 months in exile. He was in fetters and working at hard labor for 254 months! Holy Hierarch Athanassy considered that Metropolitan Sergius (Stragorodsky) had illegally usurped all of the rights of First-hierarch while Metropolitan Peter, the canonical First-hierarch of the Russian Church was still alive, thereby "freeing" Vladyka Athanassy from being subject to him and to the Synod he had formed. Bishop Athanassy stopped commemorating Metropolitan Sergius. However, after the death of the (by then) Patriarch Sergius, and the election of a new First-hierarch, Patriarch Alexey (Simansky), who was recognized by all of the bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate and by all of the Local Churches, Holy Hierarch Athanassy dared not turn away from him, and began to commemorate him. He encouraged all of his spiritual children to do the same.

In a letter to his spiritual daughter *("Can one attend churches of the Moscow Patriarchate," Herald of the Russian Student Christian Movement, № 106, 1972)* St. Athanassy made the following evaluation of analogous circumstances in the life of the Universal Church:

> "Look for example at the history of the Patriarchs of Constantinople in the XVII century. Turkish sultans appointed patriarchs, and installed as patriarchs those who made the greatest deposit in the sultan's treasury.
>
> Some patriarchs were on the patriarchal throne for a year, others for a few months or a few days. They included people who were secretly Jesuits, or who were sympathetic toward Protestantism... The sultan replaced one patriarch because someone else had promised to make a greater contribution to the sultanate treasury. How rapidly and unexpectedly patriarchs were replaced can be demonstrated by the fact that between 1586 and 1654 there had been 54 changes of patriarch. What temptations there must have been for the people around them, for the faithful!
>
> And life for the Christian Greeks during that period was one of unremitting suffering... but they did not separate themselves from their pastors and archpastors, they did not decline to attend churches in which the names of patriarchs appointed by the Muslim sultan were commemorated.
>
> One of the patriarchs of that time was St. Athanassy Patelarius who, on three separate occasions – with the requisite payments into the treasury – ascended the throne of Constantinople, and who later reposed in Russia in Lubno and was subsequently entered in the ranks of saints."

Despite the fact that Vladyka Athanassy did not commemorate Metropolitan Sergius and considered his actions uncanonical, his profound understanding of history enabled him to not refuse to attend churches in which services were conducted by clergy who recognized Metropolitan Sergius. In that regard, he wrote:

> "I considered, and consider, sharp and abusive reactions against so-called Sergianist churches and the Divine Services therein 'blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.'
>
> True zeal for the Faith cannot be united to anger.
>
> Where there is anger – there is not Christ, but inspiration from the power of darkness. Christian zeal, with love and not sorrow, can be accompanied by indignation, but not by sin (in becoming indignant, do not fall into sin).

But malicious anger is a great sin, an unforgivable sin, – a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of serenity. And, as a protest against those who tolerated non-attendance of Sergianist churches, the most-zealous Vladyka Metropolitan Kyrill (of Kazan – *Archpriest. P.*), would condemn the abuse of ignorant blasphemers and would say that if need be, in the event of approaching death, he himself would go to confession to, and receive communion from, a Sergianist priest."

Likewise, one must remind those not wanting to mix "clean" water with "murky" water, that already in the III century, the Orthodox Church had condemned those who could not allow both sinless Christ and sinners to be present simultaneously in the Holy Church. These people, the Novatianists, criticized the Church for receiving into communion those who had "fallen" in time of persecution. Let us be neither like the Pharisees, neither like the heretic Novatianists.

19. Is not "Sergianism" a deviation of a dogmatic nature? Are not "Sergianists" heretics, schismatics, and uncanonical?

Over the course of 75 years, the Russian Church Abroad has not made any conciliar determination as to what "Sergianism" is. Individuals have offered definitions, often radically differing from one another, but there has been no conciliar, universally-accepted definition. For example, in no article, no homily that has come down to us, no letter of which we are aware, did Holy Hierarch St. John (Maximovitch) ever use the term "Sergianists." He did not refer to the Church in Russia as uncanonical, graceless, or illegal. The principal reason that made communion between the Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate impossible, one systematically laid out by Vladyka John, rested in the fact that the Church in the Soviet Union was not free, that it was enslaved, and that it could not express its own actual will *(Speech by the Very-most-reverend Archbishop John; Herald of Orthodox Affairs № 4, Geneva, 1960, p.5.)*

Had Holy Hierarch John considered the Church in Russia (MP) uncanonical or schismatic, he would not have voluntarily and completely consciously submitted to the authority of Patriarch Alexey I (Simansky) in 1945. In a letter to Fr. Dimitry Dudko, Archbishop Antony (Bartoshevitch) of Geneva bore witness to Holy Hierarch John's attitude toward the Church in Russia:

"The late Archbishop John, respected and loved by all of us, used to say the following: '**The official Church in Russia of course, has grace**, although individual hierarchs are behaving in an unworthy manner.'" *(Posev № 12, 1979)*

The Russian Church Abroad has never declared in Council that the Church in Russia is "without grace." On that subject, the same Archbishop Antony wrote the following in his *Encyclical to Pastors and Flock* in 1986:

"Blind fanatics and foolish zealots may be dissatisfied only with the fact that our hierarchs (of the Russian Church Abroad – *Archpriest P.*) have never asserted that the Moscow Patriarchate is graceless, bereft of the grace of God; because of that, we always received bishops and priests coming into our Church from the Moscow Patriarchate in their existing rank. We believe and know that God's love continues to be with the Christians of our much-suffering homeland, even with those who seek it in the clergy officially recognized by the regime and in the churches of the Moscow Patriarchate."

Were the Church in Russia not canonical, schismatic or heretical, we would have to admit that all of the rites of Ordination, Baptism, Matrimony, and the other Mysteries it had performed, were invalid! Those so asserting would have to indicate from what day, from what hour, from what moment, the grace of God had ceased to function in Rus'. With respect to this question, the thoughts expressed at the Council of Bishops in 1953 by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Anastassy regarding the reception of clergy of the Moscow Patriarchate into the Russian Church Abroad are of great value. He stated:

"Do we recognize as a matter of principle the validity of the ordinations of the current Patriarch (Alexey I – *Archpriest P.*) and his bishops? Could we even call it into question? We would then have to declare the entire Church to be without the Mysteries.... [People] say that Patriarch Alexey sinned more than his predecessor. Whether he sinned more or sinned less, **we do not deny his ordination**. Much has been said about their apostasy. However, we must be careful. We can hardly make a direct accusation of apostasy. Nowhere have they approved of atheism. In their printed homilies they strive to hew to an Orthodox line. They took and continue to take very strict measures with respect to the renovationists, and they did not break their ties with Patriarch Tikhon. The false policies pertains to the Church authorities and responsibility for them falls upon its leadership. In this case, the people do not answer for the course of the leadership, and the entire Church, as such, remains **incorrupt**. No one dares state that the entire Church is without grace, but inasmuch as the priests had contact with a sly dissembling hierarchy, they themselves dissembled, acting against their own conscience, and were in need of repentance."

20. Is compromise in church life permissible?

At the IV All-Diaspora Council, Metropolitan Amfilohije responded to a question about compromises and martyrdom as follows:

"We cannot demand martyrdom of everyone. Martyrdom is a gift. I lived under the communists and by experience know what they are in essence. I do not know how I would act if they were to start cutting off my arms and legs, or to kill children. In addition to everything else, a bishop is responsible not only for himself, but for his flock. Preservation of the flock often depends upon the bishop. I recently met with Muslims and Catholics in Kosovo. Some people accused me of ecumenism. My people have been driven away, thrown out, their homes and churches destroyed, and I do not know what tomorrow will bring. At the Synod of the Serbian Church it was decided that for the sake of the flock, it was necessary to participate in negotiations, including negotiations with Muslims and Catholics. One must also remember the words of the Gospel, that 'they will kill the pastor and the sheep will scatter.' The history of the Church is not only a history of victory and Resurrection. It is also a history of Crucifixion. It is also a history of defeat, and not only the triumph of the Resurrection...

The life of the Church is a difficult life, a life of crucifixion. We must be afraid of moralizing; moralizing is dangerous. It is characteristic of Western Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as Communism. This is the dangerous road of the Inquisition. This kind of moralizing kills!"

21. The Moscow Patriarchate has yet to leave the World Council of Churches. This was a demand our Church had always made of the MP as a condition of re-establishing unity. Is this not so, and does this condition remain in effect?

B In 1987, the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate, addressed the hierarchs, clergy, and laity of the Russian Church Abroad with a call to overcome the spirit of bitterness and partition, and to take part, together with them in the approaching celebration of the Millenium of Baptism of Rus' *(Pre-jubilee Epistle, dated June 21, 1987)*. In his letter in response, the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Church Abroad, under the direction of Metropolitan Vitaly *(see Church Life № 5-6, 1987)*, noted three conditions preventing our Church from accepting that invitation at that time:

The first reason was – *"the denial by the Patriarchate of Moscow of the martyrs and confessors of our time."*

The second reason was – *"the declaration of Metropolitan Sergius* (subsequently Patriarch), t*hat the interests of the Church and the atheistic government are identical, to this day still forms the basis of their relations."*

The third reason lay in the fact that "the epistle of the Patriarchate of Moscow, even though it calls us a Church, distinctly maintains that we are *outside the salvific fold of the Mother Church*." The Epistle

written in response to the invitation was limited to those three reasons. The end of the Epistle speaks of the troubling confusion evoked by the Moscow Patriarchate's attraction to ecumenism and its participation in prayers with the heterodox. However, that was not presented as something precluding the Church Abroad from accepting the Moscow Patriarchate's invitation to participate in joint celebration of the Millenium of the Baptism of Rus', and was not framed as a condition.

Likewise, at the IV All-Diaspora Council, withdrawal from the WCC was not posed as a pre-condition for unity with the Church in Russia. The Church in Russia was told of the **plea** for such a withdrawal:

> "From discussions at the Council it is apparent that the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches evokes confusion among our clergy and flock. With heartfelt pain **we ask** the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to heed the plea of our flock to expediently remove this temptation."

This plea remains in effect and, God willing, when unity within the Russian Church is achieved, representatives of the Russian Church Abroad may be able to participate in the process of a full and final withdrawal of the Russian Church from the WCC. Religious modernists fear our having such an influence. It was for a reason that Nikita Struve, editor of the Herald of the Russian Christian Movement and one of the principal and most influential ideologues of the "Paris Exarchate" recently announced,:

> " Re-unification of the Church in Russia and Abroad is a bit frightening, because if that unification takes place... it will strengthen conservative tendencies in the Orthodox Church in Russia." *(Daily Magazine, August 21 2006)*

When, at the IV All-Diaspora Council, a question was posed to Metropolitan Amfilohije of the Serbian Orthodox Church, about the withdrawal of the ROC-MP from the WCC, Vladyka replied that "ecumenism is **a problem but is not a cause** of division between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian Church Abroad. First, you must treat the reasons for division, and then other questions, such as ecumenism."

22. In 2006, at the Assembly of the WCC in Porto Allegre, the Moscow Patriarchate participated in a summary document from which it may be concluded that baptism performed outside the Orthodox Church is recognized and that the basic decisions adopted at the ROC-MP Bishops' Council in 2000 are being violated. How should one react to that?

The given document was not adopted as a **statement**, but as an z upon which to reflect, and the ROC-MP is preparing a response, in the spirit of Orthodoxy, to that document. The ROC-MP proposed that a representative of ROCOR, together with responsible Patriarchate workers take part in preparing a reply to that ecumenical document from the WCC. This was discussed at the IV All-Diaspora Council, but none of the delegates, including the hierarchs and clergy of the Church Abroad, frank opponents of the WCC, expressed a desire to accept this proposal.

In talking about the WCC and about ecumenism, it would be appropriate to bring to mind the words of Metropolitan Vitaly's Nativity Epistle of 1986. In that Epistle, Vladyka Vitaly explains the meaning of the anathema against the heresy of ecumenism which is pronounced by the Russian Church Abroad. He writes:

> "At the present time, the majority of the Local Churches are shaken in all their organism by a terrible double blow: the new calendar and ecumenism (one should note that, in Montreal, for 40 years – from 1957 to 1999 – the new calendrist Annunciation Church, along with its rector, the V. Rev. Dr. Peter Popescu, was under Metropolitan Vitaly's omophorion. – *Archpriest P.*). But even in this sorrowful state of theirs **we do not dare**, and **may the Lord save us from this**, say that they have lost their grace. We proclaimed an anathema against ecumenism **only for the children of our Church**, but by this we very humbly but firmly, gently but decisively, as if **invite** the Local Churches to stop and think. This is the role of our most small, humble, half-perse-

cuted, always alert, but true Church. We, de facto, do not serve with either new-calendarists or ecumenists, but if someone of our clergy, by economy, would presume to such a concelebration, (Metropolitan Vitaly concelebrated with assembled clergy of the Serbian Orthodox Church both at the glorification of Holy Hierarch St. John Maximovitch in San Francisco, and at the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville in 1998 – *Archpriest P.*), this fact alone in no way influences our standing in the truth."

23. Will the real property of the Church Abroad be transferred to Moscow's control? Will not Moscow demand the return of icons and other treasures saved from the Bolsheviks by the Russian refugees?

In item 2 of the "Act of Canonical Communion," it states that the "the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is independent in pastoral, educational, administrative, management, property, and civil matters, existing at the same time in canonical unity with the fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church." In other words, with respect to real property and holy objects, the *status quo* remains. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that in the future some holy objects of the Russian Diaspora will visit Russia, and that the Russian people will have the opportunity to bow down before them and raise up their prayers before them. There is already an established precedent for this – the visit to Russia in 2004 of the relics of Venerable New Martyrs Grand Duchess Elizaveta Fyodorovna and the Nun Barbara. Over the course of seven months, the relics visited 71 dioceses, over 140 cities, and in excess of 10 million people experienced the joy of praying before the relics of these saints of God. Likewise, holy objects from the Homeland will be able to visit dioceses of the Russian Church Abroad.

24. Will bishops of the Russian Church in Russia (MP) participate in the Councils of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia?

The Russian Church Abroad had, has, and will continue to have its own Council of Bishops. All hierarchs of the Russian Church Outside of Russia may participate in the Councils of the Russian Church Abroad. It is not envisioned that hierarchs of the Church in Russia (MP) will participate in these Council. However, in accordance with the "Act of Canonical Communion," hierarchs of the Russian Church Abroad are members of the Local Councils and Bishops' Councils of the Russian Orthodox Church, and take part, according to established order, in meetings of the Holy Synod. Representatives of the clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia participate in the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church, according to established order. They likewise will have a full say in the elections of the Patriarch.

25. After the "Act of Canonical Communion" is signed, will representatives of the Russian Church Abroad have the right to concelebrate with representatives of Local Churches? Will we not then become part of "official world Orthodoxy?"

If the Moscow Patriarchate and the Church Abroad comprise one single Local Russian Church, and that Local Russian Church is part of the Universal Church, then, of course, with the blessing of the supreme ecclesiastical authority, representatives of the Church Abroad will be able to serve with representatives of all canonical Churches, thus manifesting the Church's fullness, which Holy Hierarch St. John held so dear: "[The Russian Church Abroad] must not break Communion with other Churches unless they first take that step." *("The status of the Orthodox Church after the war," Proceedings of the 2nd All-Diaspora Council of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, Belgrade, 1939, p. 400).*

Ever-memorable Archbishop Anthony of Geneva brilliantly said of the fullness of the Church in his speech at the XII Conference of the Western European Diocese in 1973:

"In the Church, there have always been good and bad shepherds, both jewels of faith and pillars of Truth, and reeds shaken by the wind of the stormy sea of life. Comprehending the strength of and the temptations brought by this wind, fanned by the Evil One, we cannot and should not per-

sonally condemn the latter...

Putting aside these bad rectors, those often forced upon the Church, an image of total concord and mutual understanding among the faithful of all Local Churches opens up to us. For it is not without reason that at the Liturgy we pray for 'the good estate of the Holy Churches of God,' and 'for the union of all' – Orthodox Christians in oneness of mind and love!

We all live in the Church in one Holy Spirit and in the grace of God. Reflecting upon and personally experiencing this Divine Fullness of the One Body of Christ, we cannot but believe in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, against Which the gates of Hell cannot prevail.

And that consciousness of the unity, holiness, sinlessness, and invincibility of the Church, in which there is neither Greek nor Jew, in which believers of all nationalities... demonstrate complete unity of faith and mutual understanding in love, that consciousness manifests our strength, our comfort, and our joy, for as the Apostle states, 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

Woe unto those who do not feel or understand that invincibility of our Faith and the Divine fullness of the Church. Distancing themselves from the errors of official representatives of the people of God and from their unworthy ambitions, their fascination with ecumenism and modernism, they shut themselves up within themselves, and like the sectarians, lose the Church while believing themselves to be the sole bearers of the Truth. The sectarian path is frightening; it is the path of pride, of loss of the conciliar consciousness of the Church, and of our organic unity in It. Such people sin against the dogma of the Church, for they do not believe that Its fullness will prevail against the gates of Hell. They also sin against the Holy Spirit, Which breathes and lives in the fullness of the Church."

We would like to end this article with the comforting words of St. Nicholas of Serbia, who shed so many tears over Christ's Holy Rus', over the fate of the Church:

"...In particular, you should not despair over the Church of God. If ultimate victory is assured to anything on earth, it is victory for the Church of Christ. The gates of Hell will not prevail against It, said the Lord.

Holy Hierarch St. Gregory the Dialogist, describing the state of the Church in his time, compared it to an old ship battered by storms, a ship into which water is pouring from all sides, for its planks have rotted through having been shaken apart by the waves that continue to buffet it every day. That was a time of difficult trials – famine, epidemics, confusion, despair, and wars, that brought agriculture into decline; people did not want to raise families, because they thought that the end of the world was at hand. That was the state of the Church XII centuries ago. But the world did not end, the situation improved, and the Church became firmly established. If the Church helmsman had been but a human being, It would have perished in the storms. However, the Helmsman was then, and is now, the Almighty Spirit of God." *(A letter to Russian Priest N.S., regarding anxiety over the Church, Missionary Letters, Moscow 2003, p. 423).*

The Entry of the Most-holy Theotokos Into the Temple
San Francisco, 2006

Translated from the Russian by Protodeacon Leonid Mickle