

Letter of Departure from ROCOR

*Nov. 25/Dec. 8, 1986
St. Catherine the Great Martyr*

Beloved Vladika,

Blagoslovite!

It is with considerable grief of heart that we feel constrained to write the following to you. However, the circumstances preclude us from taking any other course of action.

This letter is especially difficult for us in view of the fact that we have always looked to you as a true father in the faith.

The events of recent months have caused us sorrow, not so much because of the many and various slanders which have been leveled at our spiritual father, Fr. Panteleimon, and the brotherhood, and many of our clergy, but primarily because of the manner in which the so-called investigation — which was no investigation — was carried out. In every single case, witnesses of ill-repute in the eyes of the holy canons were permitted to make accusations, without their characters first being examined. The investigating bishops — as witnesses can testify — waged a campaign of slander against us. Despite the fact that our accusers had perjured themselves, as their own letters testify, this too was not taken into account.

Furthermore, our repeated requests for a canonical trial were ignored, as was the same request which was expressed in a letter of Sept. 16/29, 1986, written by clergy of the New England deanery. In addition, despite our many written requests for materials pertaining to this investigation — as our letters of Aug. 28/Sept. 10, Aug. 30/Sept. 12, and Sept. 27/Oct. 10 testify — we received no response whatsoever to these valid petitions. We repeatedly asked Your Eminence, both orally and in writing, to visit the monastery and speak with the brotherhood and lay people. This request, too, met with no response.

It is simply unheard of, that an “investigation” could be carried out for eleven months without providing the accused with any written document whatsoever, stating who the accusers were, what their charges were, etc., so that the accused could prepare a written defense. Even the number of the accusers kept on changing from day to day — and since the only reports we received were from hearsay and rumor, there was no way one could sort out the facts from

the rumors.

In fact, except for the Ukase of Sept. 4/17, 1986, we have received absolutely no written communication from our Synod whatsoever.

As if these matters were not grievous enough, we saw simultaneously that many incidents were transpiring which seriously compromised our Synod's stand against the heresy of Ecumenism.

In all these instances, we did not omit to call your attention to them and to ask you to address these issues. Unfortunately, your answers were anything but satisfactory. This was especially grievous to us — even more than the personal attacks against us, since, as far as we are concerned, matters of the faith are primary.

Yet again, despite letters and oral requests from both clergy and laypeople who asked that these issues be addressed, no action was taken by yourself or by our hierarchy.

In their letter of November 8/21, 1986, addressed to Your Eminence, our clergy of the New England deanery listed nine incidents on the part of both bishops and clergy of our Synod which seriously compromised our Synod's confession of the Orthodox Faith and its anathema against the heresy of Ecumenism. In view of the fact that many of these incidents were reported in writing, or even publicized in our Synod's periodicals, it is only right that they should have likewise been repudiated in writing on the part of our hierarchs. Again, despite the letters and protests of our clergy and people, no response whatsoever was made in writing in order to correct the scandal.

There are other incidents or statements of a similar nature which, likewise, have not been resolved. For example, you yourself, Your Eminence, have stated to Fr. Panteleimon and myself that we are in communion with "certain" bishops of the Serbian Patriarchate. Actually, your precise words were, "We cannot say that we are not in communion with the Serbian Patriarchate — it is only with -certain- bishops of the Serbian Patriarchate that we are not in communion — such as Bishop Christopher in America who prayed with women ministers." Aside from the fact that this assertion about being in communion only with "certain" bishops of the Serbian Patriarchate is irrational from an ecclesiological point of view, which bishop of the Serbian Patriarchate has renounced the heresy of Ecumenism, so that we may be in communion with him? Are they not all "organic members" of the World Council of Churches? And if it is possible for an Orthodox Church to be an "organic member" of a heretical organization, then why cannot an Orthodox Christian be an organic member of Arianism or Nestorianism?

Furthermore, we have seen how the Serbian Patriarchate practices Ecumenism officially and

on a high level. When Ramsey, the Anglican prelate, visited Yugoslavia, was he not given Patriarch German's private chapel in which to serve his mass, and was he not greeted with the acclamation "Is polla eti, Despota!" ? This is not Ecumenism? Or during an Ecumenical Conference of nuns, at which Patriarch German was present and which took place in Yugoslavia from Aug. 31 – Sept. 6, 1985, when two Roman Catholic bishops were welcomed "with special honor" into the sanctuary of the Orthodox Church and all the conferees (Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant) recited the Creed together in the Liturgy, this is not Ecumenism? Apparently, the worse possible thing a Serbian bishop can do is pray with a woman minister. Anything else is forgivable and permitted!

Despite the letters and requests of ourselves, and many clergy and laypeople, we have witnessed a steadfast refusal on your part and on the part of our Synod's hierarchy to address all the above-mentioned issues in a manner consistent with the canonical order and teaching of the Orthodox Church.

Since this is the case, our brotherhood feels that it can no longer continue in good conscience as a part of the present Russian Synodal Church. We did not wish it to be so, beloved Vladika, and you yourself are witness to the love and devotion that we have shown both towards you and our hierarchs in all matters pertaining to the Orthodox Faith for over twenty years.

However, many things have transpired during the past year that have shown us that we are not wanted. We experienced all sorts of personal slights, yet we did not take these things into account, so long as we believed that the Orthodox Faith was not being violated either by word or in practice. But now we have lost this confidence.

Since we see many of our Synod's basic teachings being trampled upon — teachings which we continue to uphold — and in view of the fact that both Your Eminence and the other bishops have steadfastly refused to address and correct these canonical and doctrinal abuses, we are left with no other choice but to seek an Orthodox refuge under the omophorion of the hierarchs of the True Orthodox Church of Greece.

Beloved Vladika, if we have grieved you as a man, we ask your forgiveness, even as we also forgive you from our heart if in any way you have grieved us.

With love in our Saviour,

Ephraim, monk
Grammateus (Secretary)

P.S. This letter is sent to you on behalf of our brotherhood, on whose behalf I wrote it. It was read in a synaxis and approved unanimously.