

Bishop Gregory (Grabbe), the oldest and most respected member of the Synod of the Bishops of the Church Abroad, served as Secretary of the Synod under Metropolitans Anthony, Anastasy, Philaret, and Vitaly for a total of almost sixty years. Now in his nineties, he wrote the following to Metropolitan Vitaly of the Church Abroad on March 24, 1994:

For a very long time now, actually from the first days of your being at the head of our Church Abroad, I have, with great distress and anxiety of heart, observed how quickly she has begun to slide into the abyss of administrative disintegration and canonical chaos . . .

Thanks to the ignoring of the Canons, our Church has lost more than twenty parishes, two monasteries, and a whole series of clergymen. This brought our Synod to another great loss of prestige. I make no mention of the thousands of lay people scandalized by us—Greeks and Americans. Among the priests who left us, we lost several of the more outstanding ones: Father Panagiotis Carras and others. The Greek priests, having given up their very wealthy parishes in order to join us, suddenly found themselves hounded out of the Russian Church . . .

For all the years of the Church Abroad's existence, we were held in respect and repute for nothing else save our uncompromising fidelity to the Canons. They may have hated us, but they dared not respect us. Whereas now we have shown the whole Orthodox world that for us the Canons are mere empty words, and we have become a laughingstock in the eyes of all who have anything at all to do with ecclesiastical matters.

I am writing this letter solely in order vividly to demonstrate to you, how we, having left the canonical rails in 1985, have begun to depart all the further from the fundamental ecclesiastical canons and statutes of our Local Church. . . .

I was a witness and a participant in the glorious period in the life of the Church Abroad, and now with pain of heart, I behold what I consider to be her inglorious end.

+ Bishop Gregory (Grabbe)