

Clarifying the Record

Preface

In the past twenty years there has been misinformation disseminated from various persons and entities about the Holy Orthodox Church in North America and Holy Transfiguration Monastery. The following pages will hopefully clarify these issues. We have never denied access to any of the following information for those who have asked for it. We sympathize with those who have been misled or misinformed and we forgive those who have misled and/or misinformed others either in knowledge or in ignorance.

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A Reply to the Synodal Decree of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) Made in May 1987

In December of 1986, Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Holy Nativity Convent and 22 parish clergy with their 14 parishes and some 5,000 faithful left the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Their main concern was that since the repose of Metropolitan St. Philaret of New York in November of 1985, contacts with Orthodox Churches involved in the Ecumenical Movement had begun to increase on a hierarchal level, in violation of the Anathema Against Ecumenism of 1983 that the entire synod of bishops had signed.

The concerns mentioned above and the allegations made by various fathers who had found monastic life too difficult, and then sought to justify their departure from monastic life, either by circumstance or design, became intertwined and confused in many spectators minds. Monk Ephraim wrote four letters in behalf of the entire brotherhood requesting an investigation in accordance with the canons of the Orthodox Church, and the bishops of ROCOR never replied to any of these requests in writing.

[First letter of Monk Ephraim, March 1986](#)

These are the letters of the accusers to which Monk Ephraim refers to, in their own handwriting, and some of the Monastery's replies to these letters:

[Letters of Monk Athanasy](#)

[Letters of Monk Gregory](#)

[Letters of Monk Mamas](#)

For a further explanation of Monk Gregory's (aka Archbishop Gregory of Denver) change of heart towards his former monastic brethren can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/2e5jb>

Later, when two more monks joined the initial four accusers, Monk Ephraim wrote the following letter in behalf of the brethren of Holy Transfiguration Monastery:

[Second Letter of Monk Ephraim, June 1986](#)

The letters below are from the two monks which Monk Ephraim refers to in his June 1986 letter:

[Letter of Monk Eugene](#)

[Letter of Monk Menas](#)

Below is an explanation by Monk Ephraim of Monk's Eugene and Menas' departure that can be verified by more than 30 witnesses.

[On the departure of Father Eugene and Father Menas](#)

When, after the passage of nine months, not one hierarch—neither the bishops who were supposedly conducting an investigation, nor our ruling bishop, Metropolitan Vitaly visited the monastery for more than a superficial visit of an hour or two. Monk Ephraim and Hieromonk Isaac wrote the following letter to Metropolitan Vitaly:

[Letter of Monk Ephraim and Hieromonk Isaac, September 1986.](#)

Also, in September of '86, almost all of the clergy of the New England Deanery wrote to Metropolitan Vitaly asking for a canonical investigation and a dismissal of the charges against Fr. Panteleimon complaining about the conduct of the accusers and the bishops conducting the so-called investigation. Canonical Church order was not being followed. It is also noteworthy that clergy reminded Metropolitan Vitaly that he had not accepted Fr. Panteleimon's request to retire in May of '86 because Metropolitan Vitaly was of the opinion that Fr. Panteleimon's request to retire could have been interpreted as a tacit admission of guilt. The fact is Fr. Panteleimon made his initial request to retire as abbot in 1976.

Later in their Synodal Decree of May 5, 1987, ROCOR claimed that Fr. Panteleimon had been retired as abbot of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in May of 1986 and Fr. Isaac appointed temporary abbot. Fr. Panteleimon, Fr. Isaac nor any member of the monastery failed to receive notification (written or oral) of this decision until September of 1986. Such an important decision should have been made in writing and sent via registered mail immediately after the decision was made if, in fact, it really occurred on the date ROCOR later claimed.

[Letter of the Clergy of the New England Deanery, September 1986](#)

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The Opinions of ROCOR's Senior Bishops on the Allegations made Against Holy Transfiguration Monastery

ROCOR's senior Bishop, Gregory Grabbe as well as their secretary for over 50 years was highly critical of the way the allegations against Archimandrite Panteleimon and Holy Transfiguration Monastery were handled as outlined in the letters below.

[Letter of Bishop Gregory to Vassily Ivanovitch, 1987](#)

[Excerpt from a Letter of Bishop Gregory Grabbe to Metropolitan Vitly, 1994](#)

The complete text of his letter is below.

[English](#)

[Russian](#)

Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago wrote to a parishioner of St. Nectarios Orthodox Church a letter defending Fr. Panteleimon in 1987.

[Letter of Archbishop Seraphim, 1987](#)

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Summary of the Events of 1986

HOCNA has always stated that its primary concern was ROCOR's inability to distance itself from Orthodox Churches that were involved in the Ecumenical Movement, in particular the Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Serbia, and that is why they left ROCOR without a canonical release in December of 1986. ROCOR has always strived to present the clergy, monastics, and laity who left ROCOR as schismatics who fled Church discipline. In May of 2007, on the Feast of the Ascension, ROCOR entered into full communion with the Moscow Patriarchate and all the Orthodox Churches involved in Ecumenism. HOCNA foresaw this in 1986, and its concerns are now completely justified.

Monk Ephraim wrote a long letter to Bishop Hilarion in February of 1987. In this letter he demonstrates how the concerns of many clergy, monastics, and laity on ROCOR's indecisiveness on applying the Anathema Against Ecumenism of 1983 became intermingled with and confused with ROCOR's handling of the slanders against Fr. Panteleimon in many people's minds. To this day it seems to be the case. Either by circumstance or design, these two issues became intertwined. It must be said that if the Bishops of ROCOR had remained integral in their application of the Anathema Against Ecumenism the issue of the mishandling of the allegations against Fr. Panteleimon would have taken a different course, but that is a moot point.

[Letter of Monk Ephraim to Bishop Hilarion, with footnotes, February 1986](#)

[Letter of Monk Ephraim to Bishop Hilarion, original version, February 1986](#)

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Allegations of 1991

In 1991 four more monks left Holy Transfiguration Monastery and three began a letter writing campaign against the monastery. The response of Metropolitan Ephraim was the following:

[Letter of Metropolitan Ephraim](#)

These are the letters Metropolitan Ephraim refers to in his above mentioned letter:

[Letters of Fr. Benjamin](#)

[Documents from Monks Elias and Benjamin, affidavits concerning Monk Joseph and Monk Benjamin](#)

[Affidavit from Fr. Isaac concerning Hierodeacon Lazarus](#)

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Allegations Against Holy Transfiguration Monastery

There have been allegations against the monastery. Some were taken into consideration, contrary to the Sacred Canons of the Orthodox Church by the bishops of ROCOR in 1986 (see above for the [opinions of ROCOR's senior bishops](#) and the [decision of the investigative committee of the Synod of Archbishop Auxentios](#)). In 1991, others wrote letters and started a campaign of gossip and innuendo, but never attempted to bring their allegations to a church or civil authority to which the monastery was subject. Very few of the men who have left continued in any sort of monastic life. At least four of them, contrary to the canons and tradition of the Orthodox Church were "laicized" by the ROCOR bishops and even permitted to marry within the Church. Since 1991, to the monastery's knowledge, there have been no allegations. There are some websites that make various claims on the number of people making allegations, but there is no way to verify what is hearsay or fact, since these accusers have not followed due process according to either Canon or Civil Law.

[Church Canons governing who may make moral accusations against clergy and also regarding monastics that break their vow of chastity and contract a marriage.](#)

Bishop Tikhon, now a retired bishop of the OCA, had these interesting observations to make concerning the allegations made against Holy Transfiguration Monastery.

[For the complete text of the Posting of Bishop Tikon dated July 23, 2004](#)

[For the complete text of Bishop Tikhon's Posting dated February, 2005](#)

HOCNA has the following documents on its official HOMB site:

[On the Moral Law of God](#)

[Part 1: What do the Saints Say?](#)

[Part 2: Edifying Narrations](#)

[Part 3: More Edifying Narrations](#)

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Church and Civil Court Actions

After the HOCNA clergy were accepted by Archbishop Auxentius' Holy Synod of the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece (TOC), a decree made by ROCOR concerning Holy Transfiguration Monastery and the parish clergy that had left ROCOR in 1986 was reviewed by a committee appointed by Archbishop Auxentios¹. The case was dismissed as spurious on grounds that church canons and due process were not followed. The TOC decision is below.

[Decision of the Investigative committee of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece Concerning the Accusations Against the Brotherhood of the Sacred Monastery of the Holy Transfiguration in Boston of America, May, 1988](#)

¹ Archbishop Auxentios was never canonically deposed. All of the bishops who "deposed" Archbishop Auxentios have now repented of their uncanonical action and restored him to the diptychs as the canonical Archbishop. See [Allegations Against Archbishop Auxentios.](#)

By ROCOR church decree, no final decision was rendered on the allegations. The clergy that departed and formed HOCNA were suspended for “disobedience” and “schism” by ROCOR in 1987 as stated in the decree below.

[Decree of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, February 4, 1987](#)

Also, no HOCNA monastics or clergy at large have ever been formally indicted in civil court nor has any monastic or clergy filed a libel lawsuit for defamation of character against individuals alleging crimes against their persons.

The following website locates individuals convicted of crimes in secular courts.

[Civil Records of Criminal Records](#)

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Conclusion

As a final word in regard to the allegations, we offer three articles that were written by a member of the brotherhood of Holy Transfiguration Monastery and an article that was written by Metropolitan Moses of Portland

[Who are the Real Victims, Part 1](#)

[Who are the Real Victims, Part 2.](#)

[“Monastic Divorce”](#)

[“A Call to Sanity”](#)

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