

9/16-29/1986

His Eminence Metropolitan Vitaly
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad
8011 Champagneur Avenue
Montreal H3N 2k4,
Quebec, Canada

Your Eminence:

We bow before you and ask your blessing.

Because of the slanderous accusations brought against Archimandrite Panteleimon of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, the clergy of the Boston Deanery met with you in your Manhattan office on July 10, 1986. At the July 10 meeting you said that you would not retire Father Panteleimon at that time because such action on your part would make him appear guilty of the accusations. You have also stated to certain members of the clergy that you did not believe that Father Panteleimon is guilty of the crimes of which he is accused, and that the accusations are from the devil.

Since we strongly agree with the position you stated in our presence and which you maintained prior to the last Sobor of Bishops in Jordanville, N. Y., we are greatly disappointed by your recent acceptance of Archimandrite Panteleimon's resignation.

In view of all these circumstances, we implore you to issue a public statement declaring the innocence of Archimandrite Panteleimon. If you are unable to issue such a statement, we hereby formally appeal to you and to the full Sobor of Bishops for a proper trial conducted in adherence to the Canons of the Holy Orthodox Church.

Our right of appeal for a full and Canonical trial before God and the Synod of Bishops is based upon three facts:

1. That all members of the clergy who look to Father Panteleimon and Holy Transfiguration Monastery for spiritual example and guidance have been accused of being a demonic cult: The written charges filed with the Synod of Bishops by Dana Miller (Fr. Mamas) in his letter of December 3, 1985 accuse not only Father Panteleimon, but all the clergy associated with him, both at the Monastery and in the Parishes which look to the Monastery for spiritual example and guidance. Specifically, we the undersigned, as a group, have been slanderously accused of being a demonic cult founded upon a vile and blasphemous theology.

2. That the charges against Father Panteleimon and the clergy who look to Father Panteleimon and Holy Transfiguration Monastery for spiritual example and guidance have been unlawfully publicized within the Church: Vladyka Alypy of Chicago violated the Church's Holy Tradition and Canons by allowing the distribution of Dana Miller's (Fr. Mamas') letter of accusation to Fr. Victor Potapov and through him to numerous other clergy. This action

by a person holding the highest office of our Church gives the seal of credibility to the accusations and has diminished the reputation of Archimandrite Panteleimon and all of the accused before the laity of the Church whom they were ordained by God to serve.

3. That accusers have been allowed freely to spread slander against the accused: Father Gregory of Denver has conducted a campaign against Father Panteleimon that is technically libelous and spiritually malicious. In this campaign, Father Gregory has continued to solicit support for his malicious accusations by telephoning and visiting members of the clergy and laity throughout the North American continent, without regard for diocesan and episcopal authority. By his actions he has attempted to convict the accused by means of a vicious and slanderous political campaign.

The first motion of our defense before the spiritual court will be for a dismissal of the charges. This motion of the defense will be based upon the traditional interpretation of the Holy Canons concerning accusers:

PREMISES: The deliberations of the Church are founded upon three premises: 1) the God-given laws of natural reason and logic are the essential basis of rational discourse; 2) all essential knowledge concerning Faith, Doctrine and Discipline has been revealed by the Holy Spirit through Holy Scripture, Holy Canons and the Holy Tradition of the Church; and, 3) the Holy Spirit, the Author of the Holy Canons, does not contradict Himself.

PROPOSITION: Within the context of the above-mentioned premises it can be shown in an unbiased manner that the Holy Canons of the Church do not allow witnesses of bad reputation to testify against the clergy in matters that will have any effect upon ecclesiastical rank or standing.

PROOFS: Three arguments concur in proving this defense:

A. Internal analysis of the Sixth Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council, based upon the laws of non-contradiction, logically demonstrates that accusers whose testimony could affect the ecclesiastical standing of a clergyman must themselves be of good reputation or their testimony is not to be admitted.

B. The interpretation of the Sixth Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council, based upon a study of concurrent canons and the premise that the Canons do not contradict themselves (specifically citing Canon 74 of the Apostolic Canons, Canon 21 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, Canons 137 and 138 of the Council of Carthage, and Canon 9 of Theophilus of Alexandria) also proves that accusers and witnesses of ill repute may not be admitted in matters affecting ecclesiastical rank.

C. A study of the interpretations of the Sixth Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council by Canonists Zonaras, Balsamon, Aristenos, and Bishop Nicodim Milash, all recognized by the Church as authorities in matters of Canon Law, demonstrates that all authoritative interpreters of the Canons agree that accusers

and witnesses of ill repute are not to be admitted in matters that will affect the ecclesiastical rank of an accused clergyman.

CONCLUSION: All lines of reasonable argument prove that accusations may not be heard from people of ill repute in matters affecting the ecclesiastical standing of the accused. In this matter, the Voice of the Church is clear, and all Canonists agree, rendering any other interpretation, such as the one offered by Archbishop Antony of Los Angeles, in contradiction of the Canons of the Church.

Therefore, we the undersigned make formal appeal to Your Eminence and to the the Full Sobor of Bishops: either 1) to issue a public statement declaring the innocence of Archimandrite Panteleimon, or 2) to conduct a proper trial in strict adherence to the Canons of the Holy Orthodox Church, allowing us to demonstrate in full, with documentation and footnotes, the arguments that have been summarized above before a properly convened spiritual court in complete confidence that adherence to the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church would have prohibited consideration of these blasphemous accusations from the very outset.

Dear Vladyka, because of the injustices and infractions of Church order cited above, and fearing for the stability of our Parishes and Communities, and ultimately the Synod itself, we patiently and faithfully await your response to this our request.

In the unity of our Saviour's Love and Faith, we remain Your obedient servants.

Archpriest George Kochergin

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Dean
Holy Nativity Convent
Brookline, Massachusetts

Archpriest John Fleser
Archpriest John Fleser
St. Anna
Roslindale, Massachusetts

Father Christos Constantinou

Father Christos Constantinou
St. Mark of Ephesus
Roslindale, Massachusetts

Father Spiridon Schneider

Father Spiridon Schneider
St. John the Russian
Ipswich, Massachusetts

+ Priest Victor Melekov

Father Victor Melekov
Holy Resurrection
Worcester, Massachusetts

Father Theodore Stavru

Father Theodore Stavru
Dormition of the Theotokos
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F. Schn. M. Ho. P. 105
 Father Deacon John Mihopoulos
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Deacon Peter Farnsworth
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Fr. Deacon John Bockman
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