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The Participation of the Holy Synod in Resistance in Important and Historic Events in the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad



The Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* and the Election of a New First Hierarch, the Consecration of a Bishop, and the Glorification of Metropolitan Philaret



RESPONDING to an official invitation, dated September 8/21, 2008, by His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel of Tauris and Odessa, our Holy Synod decided to take part in the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* of our Sister Church, the Russia Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA) in New York, as well as the Glorification of the Blessed Metropolitan Philaret († November 8, 1985 [Old Style]), third First Hierarch of the ROCA. Our Synod appointed a delegation comprised of Their Graces, Bishop Ambrose of Methone and the author of this report, Bishop Klemes (Clement) of Gardikion, Secretary of the Holy Synod.

The two Bishops from Greece arrived in the late afternoon of Saturday, November 2/15, 2008, in New York City, U.S.A., where they were met by the Very Reverend Archpriest Vsevolod Dutikow, a most

amiable cleric. Afterwards, having registered at the Astoria Hotel, we

were taken to the beautiful, contrition-evoking, and spacious Church of the Holy Trinity in Astoria, where, in keeping with the Slavic *Typikon*, the Sunday Service of Resurrection Matins was already being chanted. Father Vsevolod served with the Reverend Father Victor Dobrov, a distinguished and well-educated clergyman, and Deacon Dimitri, in the presence of a small group of faithful, who showed us great affection and respect.

Father Vsevolod and his Matushka, Irene, were extremely hospitable and helpful, and with youthful exuberance (for their ages) took care to manage harmoniously all of the details of the program for our visit.

• **On Sunday** morning, November 3/16, 2008, we attended services at the same Church, standing on the *Kleros*, where we also joined the delegation sent from our Sister Church in Bulgaria, comprised of two Priests, Fathers Valentin and Peter, and His Eminence, Bishop Pho-tii's personal secretary, Mr. Constantine Todorov (former counsellor to the Bulgarian Prime Minister). The Divine Liturgy was conducted in an unhurried spirit of contrition, in the presence of a large group of faithful, many of whom communed.

At the *Agape* Meal which followed in the parish hall, there was an exchange of touching comments with regard to the presence of the Hierarchy from Greece.

Afterwards, we went by foot to venerate the surrounding Greek Churches; that is, the Church of St. Irene Chrysovalantou and the Church of St. Markella.

Later, at the request of His Grace, Bishop Ambrose, we visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art in Manhattan.

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On Monday, November 4/17, 2008, we went by automobile to Nanuet, in the vicinity of Spring Valley, about thirty-five kilometers from New York City, and checked in at the Comfort Inn Hotel, where

the working sessions of the impending *Sobor* were also to take place. We owe, in this regard, a particular debt to the Reverend Mother Agapia (Stephanopoulos), who was our constant driver, providing for all of our transportation needs.

In the afternoon, we travelled to the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh, at the Tolstoy Farm





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Foundation, near Valley Cottage, reasonably near to our hotel, where we attended the *Panikhida* (i.e., the Memorial Service) for the repose of the souls of the previous First Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Metropolitans Anthony, Anastassy, Philaret, and Vitaly. The Service was conducted by His Eminence, Bishop Andronik of Ottawa and North America, along with four Presbyters and his Protodeacon.

From there, with the very energetic and likeable Bishop Sophrony of St. Petersburg and Northern Russia as our driver, we went to a local Chinese restaurant for a light evening meal, and then returned to the Church for Vespers and Matins for the following day.

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On Tuesday morning, November 5/18, 2008, after Liturgy at the St. Sergius Church, which was celebrated by His Eminence, Bishop Andronik and the Pastor of the parish, the brother-in-the-flesh of His Eminence, the Reverend Father Gregory Kotlyarov (who is well known for



his simplicity and kindness), as well as three Deacons, His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel of Tauris and Odessa, President of the Provisional Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration, arrived, along with his Assistant Bishop, George of Bolgrad, Secretary of the Russian Synod.

The Russian Hierarchs, Bishops Agafangel, Andronik, Sophrony, and George, were clothed in the *Mandyas*, after which they celebrated a *Molieben*, thus inaugurating prayerfully the official opening of the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* of the ROCA. All of those who were in attendance were blessed by aspersion with Holy Water.



His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone read in English a text which had been especially prepared for the occasion and which was also read in Russian



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by Protodeacon Basil Yakimov. It read as follows:

“Your Eminences, Reverend Fathers, Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

“First, I would like to extend to you the warmest greetings and congratulations on behalf of our ailing Metropolitan, the Most Reverend Cyprian, on behalf of the Acting President of our Synod, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, and on behalf all of the Hierarchs of our Synod, who have been in full communion with the ROCA since 1994. Bishop Klemes of Gardikion, Secretary of the Holy Synod, and I are here as representatives of the Synod. We pray that our Merciful Savior, through the intercessions of His Immaculate Mother, will bless your working sessions with peace, harmony, and wisdom.

“One year has passed since the lamentable decision of the majority of the ROCA to open communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. We, in the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece, did all that was possible from our side, as a Sister Church, to attempt to forewarn our Russian brothers and to avert this catastrophe, but unfortunately in vain. I need not refer at length to this matter, since you, of course, have followed these tragic events more closely than we and know better the motives behind this desertion of the traditional confession of the ROCA against the dual evils of ecumenism and Sergianism. The result is obvious to all: repeated instances of concelebration on the part of Metropolitan Hilarion and his followers with New Calendarists and ecumenists, and its speedy absorption into so-called world Orthodoxy.

“However, glory to God, not all was lost; indeed, one of the Bishops, the Most Reverend Agafangel, with a portion of the clergy and faithful, rejected the union (with Moscow) and decided anew to pursue the good confession of the ROCA, which had been upheld for so many years. It was for us a great joy that our Church, which received Episcopal Consecrations in 1960 from the ROCA, was able to repay this debt by helping (that is, our Synod in Resistance) with the Consecration of new Hierarchs for the ROCA in Odessa, in November this past year. Now, and once again at the invitation of His Eminence, Bishop Agafan-

gel, we have come here as observers from your Sister Church in Greece, at this important gathering.

“This *Sobor* was convened to establish a base for the reorganization of the ROCA, and we realize that many problems, requiring solutions, await you at every level. In all of this, we bring to you the support of our prayers, our love, and whatever practical help that we can offer.

“However, aside from the many subjects of a spiritual and administrative kind with which you are called to deal, there also looms the Glorification of Metropolitan Philaret, which is to take place this next weekend. Having had the joy of meeting him and having taken his blessing in numerous instances, this is an event of special significance



for me. However, far more important is the place which he holds in the hearts of all traditional Orthodox Christians as a Confessor, who saw and expressed with such clarity the dangers which ecumenism poses for Orthodoxy.

“I can attest to the great enthusiasm with which the Orthodox Greeks read, in the early 1970s, his ‘Sorrowful Epistles’ to the Orthodox leaders in the ecumenical movement. His words still maintain the same force that they then contained. In the minds of all of us, there is no doubt as to the reaction that he would have had to the eventuality of an unconditional union with the Moscow Patriarchate. It would have been an unreserved rejection; thus, you have been called to preserve his legacy.



“We thank His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel and the organizers of this *Sobor* for their invitation for us to be present here. It is an honor for both of us and a pleasure that we are able to take part in your work. We pray that the luminaries of the ROCA, St. John of San Francisco and the Blessed Metropolitan Philaret, will enlighten you, such that you may arrive at decisions that are pleasing to God for the progress of His Church. Christ is in our midst!

“† Bishop Ambrose of Methone”

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Subsequently, in front of the Church, photographs were taken of all of those clergy participating in the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor*.

• **Around** twelve noon, the working sessions of the Synod began in the smartly-appointed Conference Hall of the Comfort Inn Hotel in Nanuet, New York. A total of forty-two delegates were present from the dioceses of the ROCA, as well as the specially-invited observers; that is, the two Bishops from Greece and the two Priests and one layman from Bulgaria. His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel assumed the

presidency of the Synod and Archpriest George Petrenko the role of moderator. The Secretariat was made up of four persons, in addition to a female translator who provided a simultaneous English rendering of the working sessions, since the primary language



of the *Sobor* was Russian. In general, from an organizational point of view, the *Sobor* left a very satisfactory impression.

It is also worthy of note that during the first day of the working sessions, Bishop Stefan of Trenton, from the True Orthodox Church of Russia (Archbishop Tikhon), was present as an observer.

After a prayer before the Holy Gospel, the Precious Cross, and the Icon of the Most Holy *Theotokos*, Bishop George of Bolgrad read an opening statement, and proposals were made regarding the program, the agenda, and the manner of conducting the working sessions of the *Sobor*.

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Next, Bishop Agafangel delivered his keynote address, in which he emphasized the necessity of preserving the ROCA in spiritual freedom from the dangers of Sergianism and ecumenism, for the continuation of the legacy of its predecessors, which was relinquished by the majority of the ROCA through union with the Moscow Patriarchate on May 4/17, 2007. He reported on the proceedings of the Provisional Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration (PSEA) of the ROCA from May of 2007 to date, in preparation for the present *Sobor*, with a view to obtaining its approval thereof, and also mentioned the impending Glorification of Metropolitan Philaret. He insisted that the PSEA categorically reject the union achieved in May of 2007 and appealed, at the same time, for the maintenance of a spirit of conciliarity. He referred with gratitude to the participation of our Holy Synod in the Consecration of Bishops for the ROCA a year ago, to those coming to the ROCA from other Orthodox groups, and to the recent reception of clergy from the Catacomb Church in Russia.

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Following Bishop Agafangel's address, Father Valentin, one of the Bulgarian Priests, read a message of greetings from His Eminence, Bishop Photii of Triaditza, First Hierarch of the Old Calendar Church of Bulgaria, in which he expressed his good wishes for the success of the *Sobor* for the benefit of Orthodoxy in general.

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The first main topic of the *Sobor* was the recent reception, through the laying on of hands (*cheirothesia*), of Catacomb Bishops, together with their clergy and flocks in Russia. Many of the participants took the floor and conflicting views were heard, which views were expressed, at times, with vehemence and emotion. The Hierarchs gave their assurance that the Catacomb Bishops had been received, after proper scrutiny and with circumspection, in a spirit of love, unity, and *oikonomia*; however, some of those in attendance registered their intense disagreement and opposition to this move.

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Finally, two votes were taken, and both the reception of the Catacomb Bishops and the remainder of the transactions of the PSEA, as set forth in Bishop Agafangel's address, were approved by a comfortable majority.

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The second main topic of the *Sobor* was the organization of the ROCA. Bishop Agafangel raised the issue of whether a First Hierarch should be elected at all, while stating, at the same time, that under the present conditions this was perhaps not a matter of urgency and that they could continue as they were.

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This gave rise to another heated discussion; the delegates at the *Sobor*, who took turns in coming to the podium, expressed a multitude of conflicting opinions.

Finally, a vote was taken, by which, with twenty-three votes for and nineteen against, it was resolved that a new First Hierarch and Metropolitan should be elected. This concluded the first day of the working sessions of the *Sobor*.

Afterwards, we went to the Church of St. Sergius for the services of Vespers and Matins for the following day.

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• **On Wednesday**, November 6/19, 2008, Bishop Sophrony celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the St. Sergius Church, with the Priests and Deacons, and delivered a short homily.

The working sessions of the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* continued at the Comfort Inn Hotel.

The issue of forming a permanent Synod, to function as the supreme administrative body of the ROCA, and thereby dissolving the PSEA, was put to a vote and passed. The formation of a parallel advisory body to the Synod, consisting of clerical and lay representatives,

was discussed and approved. Eight of the clerical and lay delegates in attendance at the *Sobor* were assigned to membership in this advisory body.

In the ballot for the appointment of a First Hierarch and Metropolitan, twenty-two votes were cast for Bishop Agafangel, twelve for Bishop Sophrony, and two each for Bishops Andronik and George. However, since Bishop Agafangel did not receive two-thirds of the votes, as required by the Constitution of the ROCA, another ballot was held between the two front runners, twenty-three votes being cast for Bishop Agafangel, and fifteen for Bishop Sophrony.

The delegates at the *Sobor* congratulated the newly-appointed Metropolitan and chanted the *Polychronion* in his honor. The Greek delegation presented him with a pastoral staff as a token of their profound esteem and love.

• **A special** session of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA was convened forthwith for the formal confirmation of the election of its new First Hierarch, Metropolitan Agafangel. The Synod resolved that he should bear the title “of New York and Eastern America.” It also elevated Bishops Andronik and Sophrony to the rank of Archbishop and extended the title of Bishop George of Bolgrad to “Bolgrad and Bilgorod-Dnistrovskiy”; it also decided on the immediate Consecration of Father Igor Hrebinka as Bishop of Washington, following his monastic Tonsure.



After a meal, the working sessions of the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* continued with the third main topic, concerning relations with the Moscow Patriarchate.



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The document in which these relations were defined, and which had been in effect in the ROCA since 1990, was ratified as the basis for further relations with the Moscow Patriarchate, and the Act

of Communion of the ROCA with the Moscow Patriarchate in May 2007 was decisively and unanimously rejected.

Father Nikita Grigoriev then delivered a report on the issue of so-called Sergianism, which, as is well known, along with that of ecumenism, continues to be a cause of dissension with the Moscow Patriarchate. In this report, Father Nikita provided an in-depth analysis of Sergianism and demonstrated in an Orthodox spirit the reasons for its rejection.

This concluded the second day of the proceedings of the *Sobor*.

• **On Wednesday** evening, after the service of Matins for the following day in the Church of St. Sergius, the rite of the elevation of the new Metropolitan Agafangel to First Hierarch was celebrated, to the acclamations of “*Axios!*” from the clergy and laity in attendance. The new First Hierarch was vested in the appointed light blue *Mandyas* and white *Klobuk* prescribed by the Russian *Typikon*.

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• **On Thursday** morning, November 7/20, 2008, Metropolitan Agafangel concelebrated in the Church of St. Sergius with the Russian Hierarchs Andronik, Sophrony, and George, and at the end of the Liturgy the solemn Enthronement of the new First Hierarch took place.

The working sessions of the third day of the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* then continued in the Conference Hall of the Comfort Inn Hotel.

After the minutes of the first day of the *Sobor* had been read and approved, the issue of Sergianism was discussed and a number of interesting viewpoints were heard. Father Nikita Grigoriev’s report was accepted and endorsed.

The fourth main topic of the *Sobor* was the Glorification of the sainted Metropolitan Philaret († November 8, 1985 [Old Style]), the third First Hierarch of the ROCA.

Metropolitan Agafangel gave a speech in support of the Glorification, reminding those present of the incorrupt Relics of the saintly First Hierarch, as ascertained in 1998, thirteen years after his repose; his holy life and outstanding witness; his miracles; his spiritual eminence; his dedication to the Truth of the Faith; his devotion to the Church; and also the esteem in which he is held by other Sister Churches.

Before the matter was put to a vote, a variety of views was heard, some of them, in fact, expressing a degree of caution regarding the



hastiness of this Act of Glorification. In the end, thirty-two votes were cast in favor of it, with four abstentions. Some of the delegates were not present. The Proc-

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clamation of Metropolitan Philaret's sanctity was, as planned, scheduled to take place on the weekend in the Holy Trinity Church in Astoria, New York.

The moderator of the *Sobor*, Father George Petrenko, read the proposed Message of the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor*, a straightforward and succinct document written by Metropolitan Agafangel, which



was unanimously accepted and approved.

• **After that**, another special session of the Synod of Bishops of the ROCA was convened, with the participation of the newly-appointed advisory body of clergy and laity, and also of ourselves, concerning the possibility of receiving two Bishops from another ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Russia, who have submitted a request to this effect, into the canonical ROCA, and the manner of their reception. The *Sobor* was favorably disposed towards this, and positive developments are expected very shortly.

This concluded the third day of the working sessions of the *Sobor*.

• **In the evening**, at the end of Matins in the Church of St. Sergius, the Service of the Great Edict of the Bishop-elect of Washington was celebrated. His Grace had already been tonsured a monk that afternoon with the name "Joseph," in honor of St. Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd, one of the New Martyrs of Russia.



Earlier on, at Vespers for the Feast of the Holy Archangels, Bishop Ambrose took part in the *Lite*, while Archbishop Andronik presided at Matins, in accordance with the Slavic *Typikon*.



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• **On Friday** morning, November 8/21, 2008, the Feast of the Holy Bodiless Powers, Metropolitan Agafangel was the principal celebrant at the Divine Liturgy in the Church of St. Sergius, with the participation of Their Eminences, Archbishops Andronik of Ottawa and North America and Sophrony of St. Petersburg and Northern Russia and Their Graces, Bishops George of Bolgrad and Bilgorod-Dnistrovskiy, Ambrose of Methone, and Klemes of Gardikion, four Priests (Russian, American, Canadian, and Bulgarian), and three Russian Deacons. During the Liturgy Bishop Joseph of Washington was consecrated.

The new Hierarch, who delivered a short sermon, was born in 1932 and settled in the U.S.A. in 1950. He studied at the Theological Seminary of the Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Monastery in Jordanville, New York, and also studied mathematics, education, Russian literature, and modern technology at various universities in America. He was a married Priest and has five children. He was ordained Deacon and Priest by the holy Metropolitan Philaret in 1967, and served a parish in Utica, New York, for more than three decades. At the time of the union between the ROCA and Moscow, which he did not accept, he was serving at the St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Washington, DC, and was compelled by circumstances to found another parish in the same city. He is a prudent and experienced man, of whom, in spite of his advanced age, it is expected that he will work for the glory of God and for the good of His Church.



We were especially gladdened on this day by our meeting with Archimandrite Alexis, Abbot of the St. Edward Brotherhood in Brookwood, England (which belongs to the Synod in Resistance), who was due to participate in the Glorification of the holy Metropolitan Philaret, who ordained him to the Priesthood more than three decades ago.

• **At twelve noon**, the working sessions of the fourth and final day of the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* continued at the Comfort Inn Hotel.

The minutes of the second and third days of the *Sobor* were read and approved. There was another discussion of Sergianism and a confrontation of the charges against the ROCA, pertaining to events that occurred after the union in May of 2007 (regarding the stand of the senescent Bishop Daniel, who also opposed the union, and the canonicity



of its Consecrations, etc.). Father Victor Dobrov made a very important contribution to the discussion of these subjects.

Bishop George read the Synod's proposed document concerning the reasons for its rejection of the Act of Communion with Moscow of

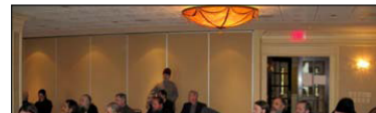


May 4/17, 2007. According to this document, the union was rejected: (1) because the Moscow Patriarchate continues to participate in the ecumenical movement, which was anathematized by the ROCA in 1983; (2) because the terms of union were not endorsed by the Synod of the ROCA; (3) because the major points of disagreement, namely, Sergianism and ecumenism, had not been resolved; and (4) because the decisions made by the unionists were contrary to the ecclesiological principles of the ROCA.

The document was put to a vote and unanimously approved by all.

Next, various proposals were heard regarding a fixed (or non-fixed) time for the convening of All-Diaspora *Sobors*, regarding canonical, pastoral, and educational issues, and also regarding the growth of monasticism (Archbishop Sophrony) and the growth of missionary work (Father Gregory Williams, who is responsible for the mission in Haiti). Metropolitan Agafangel emphasized, *inter alia*, the need for better communication at a basic level through the organization, for example, of pilgrimages with the Sister Old Calendar Churches of Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria.

After certain final matters had been settled, the Fifth All-Diaspora *Sobor* came to an auspicious conclusion, with God's help,



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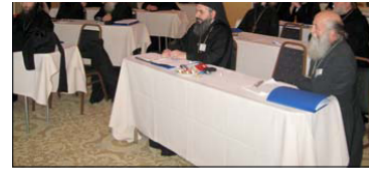


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amidst prayer and thanksgiving.

• **That same** evening, we, the Bishops from Greece, had the opportunity to meet in New York, albeit for a short time, with His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photike, who were passing through the city. The two Hierarchs of our Exarchate in America had arrived that day by ship on their return journey from Europe, after participating in the Patronal Feast of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina and in the Meeting of our Holy Synod, as well as making a trip to Constantinople and Sofia. They were going to depart immediately on the following morning for the interior of the United States, since their schedule had changed and they would be unable, unfortunately, to take part in the Glorification of the holy Metropolitan Philaret, as they had originally planned.



• **On Saturday** morning, November 9/22, 2008, we had the opportunity to go with a number of Russian participants in the *Sobor* on a guided tour of Manhattan, as far as the famous Statue of Liberty, that familiar symbol of the U.S.A.

We saw, in brief, Columbia University, the famous Broadway Avenue, old Gothic cathedrals (St. John the Divine and St. Patrick), museums, bridges, parks, Little Italy and Chinatown, Brooklyn, several world-famous thoroughfares (Wall Street and Madison Avenue), the stately building housing the Synod headquarters of the ROCA, the site of the destruction of the Twin Towers at Ground Zero, etc. Skyscrapers dominated the scene, the technology was impressive, but it was bitterly cold!

• **Late on** Saturday afternoon, the Resurrectional Sunday Vigil Service was celebrated in conjunction with the Service to St. Philaret, the newly-revealed Ascetic and Confessor, composed by Archpriest Valery Alexeev of Odessa (who was present), in the Holy Trinity Church in Astoria.

Another of our own Synod's clergy, Father Nicholas Chernjavsky, who serves the parish in Rochester, New York, came to the Church to

take part in the services. (Mother Agapia [Stephanopoulos], sister of the former advisor to President Clinton and now a television news personality, resides at the parish house in Rochester.)

Bishop Joseph of Washington presided at the *Lite* in Great Vespers.

At Matins, before the *Polyeleos*, the seven Hierarchs present (Agafangel, Andronik, Sophrony, George, Joseph, Ambrose, and Klemes) came out from the Altar in full Hierarchical vestments, together with the clergy, and the Icon for the Glorification of St. Philaret was carried, covered, to a special *Proskynetarion*. At the appointed time, Metropoli-

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tan Agafangel uncovered it, and all present venerated it in prayer, compunction, and joy, magnifying the new Saint of God here on earth and beseeching mercy, Grace, and sanctification.



The Synodal Act of Glorification was read by Archbishop Sophrony, and Bishop Ambrose read in English a festal salutation

("A Message of Gratitude") written specially for the occasion by His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of our Holy Synod, which was also read in Russian translation.

"A Message of Gratitude on the Occasion of the Glorification of the Russian Metropolitan Philaret († November 8, 1985)

"Your Eminence, Bishop Agafangel (*); Holy Hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad; Beloved and venerable brothers and sisters in Christ:

"We are most profoundly moved in the Holy Spirit on this historic day and at this historic moment, at which the sanctity of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Philaret is to be proclaimed with the utmost solemnity and in accordance with ecclesiastical order.

"His Eminence, our much-revered Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, President of our Holy Synod in Resistance, had the especial joy and honor of knowing the most holy Metropolitan Philaret personally.



"When St. Philaret reposed in 1985, our Metropolitan wrote the following words, *inter alia*, in an article dedicated to his memory:

"Metropolitan Philaret, the First Hierarch of the ROCA, 'was distinguished in particular for his vigorous stand against the panheresy of ecumenism; and his epistles, replete with zeal for Orthodoxy, yet composed with characteristic discretion, in which he condemned this heresy and censured its ring-leaders, saw the light of publication.'

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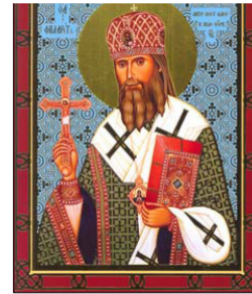
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menists as 'a man of great virtue and faith,'² and his first 'Sorrowful Epistle' (July 1969) was characterized quite correctly as a 'milestone'; 'for it was, at the same time, a cry of "sorrow," a searing protest and entreaty, and a stratagem for the course of Orthodoxy.'³

"In the person of Metropolitan Philaret, by the Grace of God, Orthopraxy, the God-pleasing and sanctified life, was united with Orthodoxy, the correct and Patristic Confession of the Faith.



"This combination of practice and faith, this great offering of God to a Shepherd of the True and Only Church, was also a tremendous gift of Our Savior Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, to Orthodoxy at a very crucial turning-point in its history.

"Metropolitan Philaret was vouchsafed the precious crown of Confession, for he proved worthy of the historic calling and ministry that the Divine Comforter entrusted to him at his Episcopal Consecration.



"In the person of St. Philaret the Confessor, the Hierarchs of our Holy Synod venerate with profound awareness a contemporary God-bearing Father of our Church, who was conspicuous for his boldness, humility, compassion, hope, and love in his sacred struggle *against* syncretistic

ecumenism, as well as so-called Sergianism in Russia, and *for* immaculate Orthodoxy.

"May the Hierarchical intercessions of our Father among the Saints, Philaret the Confessor, strengthen, guide, and protect the Martyric Russian Orthodox Church Abroad in this new period of its history, and also all Orthodox anti-ecumenists, until such time as



we are granted the gift of celebrating a new Sunday of Orthodoxy, a Feast of the Restoration of Patristic Orthodoxy, unto the Glory of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, through the Most Blessed *Theotokos*. Amen!

*Phyle, Attica,
November 1, 2008 (Old Style)
Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian*

*† Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi,
Acting President of the
Holy Synod in Resistance*

Notes



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* Bishop Agafangel had already, in the meantime, been elected Metropolitan of the ROCA, and was addressed, at the reading of this text, in his new capacity.

1. *Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνοστασις καὶ Μαρτυρία*, Vol. I, No. 2 (January-March 1986), p. 29.
2. *Ὁρθόδοξος Τύπος*, No. 113 (January 1, 1970), p. 1.
3. *Ibid.*

* * *

• **After** venerating the Icon of St. Philaret, the Hierarchs anointed themselves with holy oil, while the Priests, Deacons, Subdeacons, and the large multitude of the People of God were anointed by Metropolitan Agafangel and Archbishop Sophrony.

The compunctious service, which lasted for more than four hours, concluded after 9:00 p.m.

* * *

• **On Sunday** morning, November 10/23, 2008, a Festal celebration of the Divine Liturgy was held at the Holy Trinity Church in Astoria. Metropolitan Agafangel concelebrated with five Hierarchs (Andronik, Sophrony, George, Ambrose, and Klemes), about thirty Priests, and five Deacons. Many Subdeacons and a large crowd of the faithful were in attendance.

During the Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Agafangel ordained a Deacon to serve in a parish in the Boston area.



Very many faithful communed from two Chalices.

Prior to the Dismissal, a *Molieben* was served before the Icon of St. Philaret, and Metropolitan Agafangel delivered a brief festal homily.

• **Later on**, at noon on Sunday, we went to a banquet hall in Astoria for a festal repast, at which the Hierarchs, many clergy, and a large multitude of the faithful were present. Bishop Ambrose and Bishop Klemes, among others, delivered congratulatory messages.

The presence of the ailing Metropolitan Paul of America, from the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece (Synod of Archbishop Chrysostomos [Kiouses]), who came with some of his clergy to this happy event, was a pleasant surprise. We had an opportunity to discuss matters of common interest in a friendly atmosphere.

* * *

• **On Monday**, November 11/24, 2008, we once again visited the Old Calendar Greek Cathedral of St. Markella in Astoria, from where we were driven to the hospital at which Metropolitan Paul is staying for the sake of his full recovery. We had another rather amicable meeting, in which his Assistant Bishop, Christodoulos of Theoupolis, who arrived at the same time, also took part.

At noon, we had lunch at the home of Father Vsevolod, in Astoria, with Metropolitan Agafangel and Father Gregory Williams. We had



a friendly conversation and bade a very fraternal farewell to each other, hoping for a new meeting in the near future, with God's will and help.

We departed from New York by air on Monday afternoon (American time) and arrived in Athens on the morning of Tuesday, November 12/25, 2008 (Greek time).

* * *



• **The memories** that we brought back from all that we experienced, saw, heard, and felt were very positive. There is absolutely no substitute for personal contact. We participated in historic events in the life of our Sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad—events that will be decisive for her future. We experienced the mystery of unity and love in a tangible way. We shared with our Russian brethren in their deliberations, their ruminations, and their joys at what is a critical, but also joyous, time for them. We communed with them in the Mysteries, in a spiritual way and in our hearts. We entered into the mystery of our unity in a way that we had never done before. The legacy of the newly-glorified St. Philaret devolves on us, too, with exceptional clarity and makes us also responsible for its preservation. We traverse the path marked out for us by the golden chain of sanctity down to our



