

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church, Gosford

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 58, September-October 2006 ~

**ADDRESS OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS TO THE GOD-LOVING FLOCK OF
THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA**

Dear in the Lord Fathers, Brothers and Sisters!

For 90 years now, the dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia have existed on all continents, along with monasteries, publishing houses and parishes. Everything that signifies church life: parish councils, sisterhoods, schools, youth groups, general parish meetings, magnificent choirs, altar boys, etc. gathered around them. All this arose as diocesan conferences and Church Councils convened, which regulated all of church life. Thus, through the chaos of the persecution of the Russian Church, the Russian Orthodox people gathered to stand around their Hierarchy, which found itself abroad, and strove to serve towards the emancipation and rebirth of their people on the foundation of the Orthodox Faith.

Within the boundaries of Russia, persecution took the form of the absolute destruction of faith in Christ. Much was destroyed, many suffered. But the Lord did not permit the disappearance of the Church in our Homeland. In those places where ancient churches survived, people are once again gaining spiritual nourishment. That which was destroyed is being rebuilt. Church life is rising from the ashes.

Archpastors, clergymen and believers are trying to rebuild Orthodox Russia anew. This process of renaissance requires effort and the strength of will, since it is necessary to conduct spiritual educational work with the descendants of the generations of godless violence which touched absolutely every person without exception. Many obstacles remain on this path, but we see that these obstacles, and the remnants of Soviet times, are gradually being overcome.

The day has arrived when we must seek the reestablishment of communion with the wellspring of our own traditions. For there are two wills at work—one being that of those Russians who are children of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, prepared in every way to cooperate in the reestablishment of church life and development of the spirituality of the people, and the other is from our brethren and sisters in Russia, who labor towards her rebirth and extend their hand to us.

Positive changes in the church life of our Homeland spurred the Council of Bishops of October 2000 to establish a Committee on the unity of the Russian Church and to

bles the organization of scholarly conferences on church history with the participation of the members of our Church and representatives of the Church in Russia. These conferences were held in 2001 and 2002. Then, in December 2003, a Commission on discussions with the Moscow Patriarchate was formed. At the same time, the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate decided to create a similar Commission on dialog with our Church. This bore witness to the earnest and good-willed effort of both parts of the Russian Orthodox Church to make sense of the tragedy of our common history, so that we "may discuss peacefully... whatever question there is which separates your communion from us," as we read in Canon 92 (103) of the Council of Carthage, which called upon the flock to trust their Hierarchy, which possessed the right to heal the divisions between the Orthodox and the Donatists.

The "Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia," the by-laws under which our Church lives, demand that we regularize the situation of the Local Russian Church. It is important to note that a commission to revise the "Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia" was established before the year 2000.

This shows that even then it was apparent that our "Regulations" are in need of amendment. Since 2000, new possibilities emerged in this regard. Now, in connection with the adoption of the "Act on Canonical Communion," our by-laws can be reexamined, taking into account new possibilities.

Still, it is necessary to point out that we are not discussing the "self-abolishment" of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. Our Church will exist as before, as attested to by the first paragraph of the "Act on Canonical Communion:" "The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, conducting its salvific service in the dioceses, parishes, monasteries, brotherhoods and other ecclesiastical bodies that took shape through history, remains an indissoluble part of the Local Russian Orthodox Church." These words in the "Act" attest to the recognition on the part of the Moscow Patriarchate of our historical path and of the living bond between the entire Local Russian Orthodox Church and its part abroad, which always existed and which we never denied. This historical document will reestablish the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church, through this mutual act acknowledging the lawful status of the Russian Church Abroad and the Moscow Patriarchate in Russia. Each side, preserving its identity as a Church, will continue to exist in full legality and independence, but now recognizing the other side and declaring the unity of the Russian Church. For this reason, this means the reconciliation and mutual recognition of each other while yet preserving our administrative self-governance, for we

understand the needs of our clergy and of our flock better than they understand them in Moscow.

The IV All-Diaspora Council and the Council of Bishops that followed approved the steps towards reestablishing unity already taken by our Hierarchy, and blessed its continued progress.

The above-mentioned "Act" has been approved and confirmed by the Synod of Bishops, but it will be finally adopted when it is signed by the Primate of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. Working out the details of this signing, and also the Rite of the establishment of canonical communion has been assigned to the Commission on discussions with the Moscow Patriarchate. It is expected that it will embark on this task jointly with the Commission on dialog with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia at their next meeting. Then, the results of this meeting will be considered at the next session of the Synod of Bishops, which will be held in December of this year.

Dear in the Lord fathers, brothers and sisters! We do not intend to depart from our positions of principle, in particular with regard to the ecumenical movement. We intend to continue to firmly speak out in condemnation of the so-called "branch theory" and of joint prayer with heretics, which is emphasized in our anathema of ecumenism adopted by the Council of Bishops of 1983. This is reflected in the documents of the church Commissions confirmed by both Holy Synods and published in the official publications of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. From this we see that in the Moscow Patriarchate, our attitude towards the heresy of ecumenism has long ago been absorbed. That is why we are not compromising the inherited principles which have always guided us. Still, we were always open to dialog with everyone, but on the condition that this be done without any hindrance to Orthodox teaching. In the decisions of the Councils of Bishops we always held fast to the ecclesiology of moderation, and never rejected the presence of grace in the Moscow Patriarchate or in other Local Churches.

We will continue to maintain the spirit of our great fathers, the founders of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, following their legacy and the historical path of our Church. To carry this great inheritance to Russia is the mission we strive to fulfil.

We will always remember that only in the Kingdom of Heaven will everything be perfect and good, that in the Church on earth we will perpetually experience difficulties caused by human passions, failings, temptations and sins, which must be overcome by means of beneficial fraternal dialog and cooperation, condescension,

understanding and a Christian attitude towards each other, as Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: "correct such a one in the spirit of meekness" (Galatians 6:1).

In conclusion, let us remember Schema-Archimandrite Amvrossy (Kurganov) of blessed memory, the Abbot of Vvedensky Milkovo Monastery in Serbia, whence came several bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, since departed. The eminent church figure of the Russian diaspora, P.S. Lopukhin, writing on the Christian death of Fr Amvrossy, said: "I preserve in my memory this image of a man, weeping in joy on his death bed for Divine unity." Blessed Metropolitan Anthony said of Fr Amvrossy that in spirit he was closer to him than anyone.

May God grant all of us to experience this feeling of "spiritual joy in Divine unity," leading us to the successful conclusion of the process of reconciliation of the two parts of the Russian Orthodox Church.

May the Lord help us! Amen.

+ LAURUS,

Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York,
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

+ Mark, Archbishop of Berlin and Germany

+ Kyrill, Archbishop of San Francisco and Western America

+ Michael, Bishop of Geneva and Western Europe

+ Gabriel, Bishop of Manhattan

+ Peter, Bishop of Cleveland

**STATEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP HILARION OF SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA AND
NEW ZEALAND, CHIEF DEPUTY OF THE PRESIDENT OF
THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS**

My absence from the September session of the Synod of Bishops has been erroneously interpreted by some as being an expression of disagreement with our Synod. All sorts of absurd explanations and premature conclusions have appeared on the internet. In fact, I suffered from a bad cold, complicated by bronchitis, which precluded making any long-distance trips, which can be attested to by my physician and others who were with me at the time.

The last session of the Synod of Bishops considered the latest version of the "Act on Canonical Communion" between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Moscow Patriarchate. Dialog between representatives of both sides have been ongoing for several years, and the two Commissions have achieved many positive agreements on the main differences which have existed for almost 80 years.

One of the most material questions in this dialog is the participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the ecumenical movement and its membership in the World Council of Churches. Our Russian Church Abroad in recent decades has held a very staunch, negative attitude towards ecumenism, having in 1983 anathematized the "branch theory," which does not recognize Orthodoxy as the One True Church of Christ. On their part, the Moscow Patriarchate has clearly defined its attitude towards the ecumenical movement, condemning the "branch theory" in its Council documents of 2000; and in the documents of the Church Commissions approved by both Holy Synods, they condemned all sorts of joint prayer with heretics, explaining its continued membership in the World Council of Churches together with the other Local Orthodox Churches as a means of witnessing Orthodoxy and defending the interests of the Church and of the Russian people. The Synod of Bishops' "Clarifications on the Negotiation Process and the 'Act on Canonical Communion'" defines the framework of this activity of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches, in which neither dogma nor canons of the Holy Church are violated:

"The Russian Orthodox Church strictly adheres to the teaching set forth in the Creed that the Church of Christ is one... As the Body of Christ is the sole vessel of salvation, as the pillar and foundation of truth, the Church never divided itself nor disappeared, but always, over the entire history of Christianity, taught the pure teaching of the Gospel in the abundance of the grace-filled gifts of the Holy Spirit."

Still, we see that participation in the World Council of Churches and various ecumenical measures is fraught with great spiritual danger for Orthodox Christians. In this matter, the IV All-Diaspora Council on May 11, 2006, called upon the Moscow Patriarchate to review its position on membership in the World Council of Churches:

"From discussions at the Council it is apparent that the participation of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches evokes confusion among our clergy and flock. With heartfelt pain we ask the hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to heed the plea of our flock to expediently remove this temptation."

The Moscow Patriarchate could take the example of the Georgian and Bulgarian Orthodox Churches, which withdrew from the World Council of Churches. In our opinion, the good example thus shown by the Russian Orthodox Church may be followed by the other Local Orthodox Churches. The Russian Orthodox Church, as we noted earlier, would best adhere to the course adopted at the Pan-Orthodox Conference held in Moscow in 1948.

In my letter to the Synod of Bishops, I wrote that many clergymen and laypersons who have a sympathetic attitude towards the normalization of relations between the divided parts of the Russian Orthodox Church, and who desire unity, are still troubled by the

continuing participation of the Moscow Patriarchate in the activities of the World Council of Churches. In addition, the press often reports on conferences and summits in which representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate participate, invoking suspicion among Orthodox believers as a result of questionable achievements in ecclesiastical diplomacy.

In this way, the continuing presence of the Moscow Patriarchate in the World Council of Churches evokes serious concern though to no lesser degree within our church society to this day. Our main challenge as archpastors is to nourish the flock entrusted to us and not allow schisms and discord in church life. Not all of the flock is prepared to join in the process of reconciliation and the reestablishment of communion with the Church in Russia. This attests to the fact that, in my opinion, a little more time and effort is needed to achieve mutual understanding and trust.

As all the Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, I earnestly desire with my entire soul the reconciliation and spiritual unity of the separated parts of the Russian Orthodox Church. I believe that this moment will arrive, and soon, God willing, when it suits Him. I grieve for the part of the flock entrusted to my obedience which genuinely rejects today our entering into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. I do not desire the falling away of a single soul from the bosom of the Holy Church into graceless schismatic groups.

In my personal opinion, for the sake of the spiritual preservation of the flock, the process of the normalization of church relations requires more time, strengthened prayer and a closer and more reasoned study of the life of the Church in Russia, while clearing away false perceptions and prejudices on both sides of this important matter.

I wish to bring witness that I am fully devoted to our wise and spiritually discerning First Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Laurus, and the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, and call upon all loyal children to be dedicated and obedient to the hierarchy of our Church, and I also urge the prayerful podvig towards the God-pleasing resolution of the complex and painful process of the reestablishment of church unity.

+ Hilarion, Archbishop of Sydney, Australia and New Zealand

September 11/24, 2006

Sydney

PARISH LIFE: PREPARING FOR OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Every year in November our parish holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM), the most important event in parish administration each year. At the AGM, the events and administration of the past year are reviewed, and plans for the future discussed. A booklet including a 'Notice of Annual General Meeting', the meeting agenda,

nomination forms for Parish Council, and important information about parish administration was posted to members on October 12th. All financial parish members are invited to attend and participate in the AGM. Those unable to attend should let the Parish Council secretary, Kate Marcotrigiano, know well in advance. All documents relating to the AGM that were posted to financial members are also available on the website. A reminder: membership dues for 2006-07 should now be paid. Membership renewal forms have been sent out with information about the meeting, and are also available at church from Kate.

PARISH LIFE: FUNDRAISING BBQ AT CABRAMATTA

On Sunday 12th November, the Intercession of the Holy Virgin Church in Cabramatta will kindly host a fundraising BBQ to benefit our parish. As there will be no service in Gosford that weekend, all those of our parishioners who are able to be present at Cabramatta are encouraged to attend. Father Boris Ignatievsky and the parishioners of Cabramatta have shown us great generosity and kindness over the years, and we are grateful for their continuing support. May the Lord bless them!

PARISH LIFE: THE WEBSITE

Our website was updated in early October with reports of our Fathers' Day BBQ and the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross; profiles of parishioners Kate Marcotrigiano and Sophia Kfoury; and information relating to the forthcoming parish AGM. This newsletter will be online by mid-October, and there will be further AGM information and news reports available by late October. Remember that the site has a new URL, www.gosfordrussianchurch.org.au; you need to add a ".au" to the end of the old address.

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

The Parish Council met in early September and again in early October. There will be a second meeting in late October in order to finalise preparations for the AGM. Topics of discussion over the last two meetings have primarily been concerned with financial management and with the AGM. At the October Parish Council meeting, those present reviewed the draft 2006 Annual Report and discussed the presentation and analysis of parish financial reports. Attention was also given, as always, to developments and trends in parish life. The next meeting, the last for the current parish council, will be on Tuesday October 31st. The new Parish Council, the one elected at the AGM, will meet for the first time on December 5th before taking a break for the Summer and reconvening again in February 2007.

PARISH LIFE: BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION GROUP

Mention has been made in previous issues of the newsletter of a parish Bible study and discussion ("beseda") group. Unfortunately this group has been difficult to sustain, and so effectively stopped meeting after August this year. It is hoped that similar activities may become more of a possibility at some stage in the future.

REPOSE IN THE LORD OF IRINA KAMENEV

ВЕЧНАЯ ПАМЯТЬ!

On Saturday September 16th Father James received that sad news that one of our parishioners, Irina Alexandrovna Kamenev, had passed away the previous day. Mrs Kamenev and her daughter Marina Matwejev have been part of our parish from the early days at Narara. Archpriest John Stukacz served a pannikhida by her bedside on the day of her repose and again the following day at the Cathedral. The funeral was served on Friday September 22nd, with the newly-mitred Archpriest John Stukacz, Father James, and Protodeacon Boris Evstigneev all serving. Mrs Kamenev was buried in Rookwood Cemetery alongside her husband. We pray that God will grant her rest with the saints, and that He will give consolation to her children Marina and Alexander and their families. And may her memory be eternal!

PARISH LIFE: ENGLISH SERVICE IN OCTOBER

Sunday October 29th, the last Sunday in October, is the fifth in the month, and so we will have an English-language Divine Liturgy. It is expected that Hieromonk John (MacPherson) will preside at this service and also give the sermon. Matushka Marie and the English choir will sing, as usual.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick & suffering: Our parishioner Antonina (Tialshinsky), Volodymyr, Vasili, Vera, Eugenia, and Daniel

Expectant mothers: Matushka Larissa (Orthodox); Jasmin, Alison (non-Orthodox)

Newly-baptised: Dmitri

Departed: Metropolitan Vitaly, Irina (Kamenev)



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