



Sacred Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece
His Eminence, Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto,
Locum Tenens of the See of Athens
5 Northcliffe Boulevard, Apt. 5,
Toronto, Ontario, M6H 3G9 Canada

5/18 December, 2001

An open letter to Protopresbyter Victor Melehov
From: Makarios, Metropolitan of Toronto and Locum Tenens of the See of Athens

Dear Father Victor,

Although you have received an official reply from the Sacred Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece to your letter addressed to me, dated 8/21 November, 2001, I also wanted to reply directly to you since the tone of your letter is accusatorial and defensive.

You allege that because the Sacred Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece authorized the North American hierarchs to form an eparchial synod, the Sacred Synod is dissolved and an autonomous North American Church has been created. This is a non sequitur and is unequivocally a falsehood.

As we have discussed repeatedly in the past, we, as hierarchs of the Sacred Synod cannot dissolve it since it is from this very Synod and Church of Greece that we received our ordinations and derive our canonicity and legitimacy.

You may recall that in our Synod's correspondence with the Synod of Metropolitan Kallinikos, we emphasized that our intent was not to form an autonomous North American Synod, nor to sever our ties with the Church of Greece. It was precisely Bishop Makarios' allegations that this was our intent, that ultimately led to the breakdown in discussions and the cessation of the exchange of letters.

Since you have been apprised of all the details of our discussions, including the English language translation of all correspondence, I am surprised that you should conclude that the direction of our Sacred Synod was or is toward autonomy.

Further, we articulated clearly, during our Synod meeting of 25 September/8 October, 2001, before the vote, the expressed reasons for our request to form an eparchial synod. This synod allows the hierarchs of North America to meet and discuss mutual concerns and projects for the parishes and faithful within the eparchy. We indicated such concerns as religious education, publications, youth camps, support and nurturing of monastic communities and preparation and training of candidates for ordination. These objectives and concerns in no way compromise or abrogate the functioning and jurisdiction of the Sacred Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece.

If you refuse to understand these distinctions of function and purpose of the two synods, this is unfortunate and to your detriment, since you have selected for yourself – and unfortunately for others – a precarious and dangerous course of action: separation from the Sacred Synod and the True Orthodox Church of Greece.

At the risk of sounding defensive, I must write a few words about my efforts as locum tenens of the See of Athens, in behalf of the True Orthodox Church of Greece. Again, you are fully aware of the situation in Greece – as well as our attempts to organize and stabilize circumstances there. The tone of your letter suggests otherwise. The casual reader may conclude from your remarks and observations that I have done nothing or little to assist the faithful in Greece.

Contrary to your expressed opinion, all faithful in our Synod and under the omophoria of our hierarchs, should know that we have labored diligently – not only to visit, encourage, serve and nurture the clergy, monastics and faithful in Greece – but also, we have striven to add clergy to our Synod and to seek appropriate candidates for ordination. Just as you have in Russia.

Father Victor, rest assured, that my conscience is clear in this matter, and as a high priest of the Lord High God, I have held back nothing in order to strengthen and tend the flock in Greece. On this count, my apologia in the Day of Judgment is in tact.

Finally, following your separation from our Synod, I visited the faithful in Russia in my capacity as locum tenens of the See of Athens since I am responsible for them – the exarch and his actions notwithstanding. Your actions have confused them and caused them much grief and turmoil. They, as we, love and respect you very much. As we trusted you implicitly, so they. Now there is distrust, suspicion and fear. During my visit, I attempted to restore trust and confidence in our Sacred Synod, and to allay their fears. Many are new to True Orthodoxy and are unsure, insecure and fragile in their faith.

Father Alexei and Father Dimitry have indicated that they will remain in our Synod. We are committed to reorganizing and reestablishing the communities with whomsoever of the faithful shall remain within our Synod.

In behalf of the Sacred Synod of the True Orthodox Church of Greece, and out of respect for the memory of our beloved confessor hierarch, Archbishop Auxentios of blessed memory, I ask that you return the Antimeinsia which were signed by him, as well as all other properties belonging to the Synod's Russian exarchate.

Concerning the real estate in the name of Lydia, please notify me concerning it, following your visit to Russia. The faithful both in St Petersburg and Moscow indicated that the resolve concerning the property should be among us – i.e. the Synod, you and Lydia – and not them. Lydia herself told me that she would assist in this matter and I trust that we can cooperate to solve any issues in good faith and with goodwill among us.

To close, Father Victor, I ask you to reconsider your action or decision and return to our Synod, for the sake of your salvation and that of others who may follow you.

Whatever happens, I will keep precious the memory of three events in my life which involve you. Firstly, your conduct in the courtroom during the case involving the defense of the parish against the Synod of Metropolitan Vitaly – and of this I have already spoken and expressed my sentiments and impressions.

Secondly, your involvement in the arrangement and execution of the service and celebration of the Glorification of Saint Philaret the New Confessor. The event was a hallmark in the history of our Church and we are grateful and appreciative of your efforts and participation.

Thirdly, our visit to Russia last June-July. I observed you among the faithful and understood something new about apostleship and indeed the great need for workers in the Vineyard. The flock may be small, as our Saviour Himself said, but our prayer continues to be, "Lord O Lord, look down from Heaven and behold, and visit this Vine and perfect that which Thy right hand has planted".

With love in our Saviour Christ,

Metropolitan Makarios