



ASSOCIATION OF CITIZENS ANASTASIJA

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Bitola

Respected,

The Association of Citizens Anastasija, registered at the Primary Court of Bitola by Resolution no. assoc. c.f. 77/2002, beside other issues in its Programme and Statute, states its purpose to: “Inform the public about the needs of the rightless, the humiliated and the offended” as well as to help “the unjustly persecuted”.

We have prepared this text considering that a very significant contemporary of ours, namely the Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje and Exarch of Ohrid, kyr kyr John, due to the Macedonian syndrome for destruction of all that is worthy, has first been deprived of his rights then persecuted, humiliated and offended. With this text we wish to inform the Macedonian and world public not only of his work, but also of the injustices he has endured precisely by those to whom he has entirely devoted his service, the Church and his own people.

Those who know him, in Metropolitan John recognise in a person capable of intensely influencing the events of the world history, particularly the ecclesiastical. He is a complete person, a spiritual and intellectual giant, who has put all of his gifts in the service of his people. He graduated at the Faculty of Civil Engineering in Skopje, afterwards he graduated at the Faculty of Theology in Belgrade, he completed his master studies in Thessalonica and he speaks four international languages. Regular church goers are cognisant of the fact that he accepted the highest church rank, the rank of a bishop, as a sacrifice, so that he can contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church in Macedonia with the Orthodox Church in the world, for until a few months ago there was a thirty-five-years-long schism.

Unfortunately, betrayed by his brethren the bishops, who had previously signed in Nis what the Metropolitan John had the courage to put into practice, he took the burden of one of the most important events in the modern history of R. Macedonia. This event is of no less significance than the proclamation of independence of the R. Macedonia, for this is an event that represents a further stage in the integration of our country in the great world processes. He is a person who is steady in his decisions, prepared to undergo various pressures for his ideals, a man firm and brave enough to confront many because he believes that he fulfils the truth, so, he deserves our honour and our affection.

The Holy Synod of the MOC had no arguments to initiate a church trial against the Metropolitan John. He was evicted from his cathedra without being previously put to trial or sentenced, and it is apparent even to those who have only a slight knowledge of the church canonical law that such an act must be illegal, or, speaking in church terms, it is uncanonical. Now the Public Prosecutor of Veles has initiated a legal suit against the bishop accusing him of financial misuses. But was it necessary for the Metropolitan John to enter liturgical and canonical unity with the Serbian Orthodox

Church and through it with the other sister Churches to make them realise his financial misuses? Was it necessary to wait for three years as he has been a bishop in Bitola and two years since his administration with the bishopric of Bregalnica, so that he could be accused of financial subterfuge in the respective bishoprics? Weren't the annual balances of the bishoprics he governed each year under control of the higher bodies and no one objected to anything so far? And finally, should the persecution against him be utterly uncivilised, undemocratic and unconstitutional, through the State and its agencies, and we all know that in Macedonia the Church is supposed to be separated from the State?

The police of R.M, utterly unconstitutionally, interfering with the internal affairs of the Church, delivered the decision of the Synod of the MOC (the very Synod that for 35 years has been deceiving the people in Macedonia about its autocephaly, regardless of the fact that it is not recognised by anyone in the world) on the basis of which the Metropolitan John was no longer an employee in the Macedonian Orthodox Church. It is not so important that the Metropolitan John wasn't an employee in a shoe factory and the Managing Board of the factory had decided to dismiss him (in the Church, in order to dismiss a priest it is necessary that the priest is first convicted – this is even more important when a bishop is concerned), as is the fact that the police, who were executors of the persecution, not only violated the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, art. 19 par. 3 by interfering in the internal affairs of the Church, but also of art. 26 par. 1 where “the inviolability of one's home is guaranteed”. It will be historically noted as a unique case in the recent history of the Orthodox Church, which is, the history after the Ottoman rule, that a bishop was, with the use of weapons, by the police in Macedonia, utterly illegally evicted in the streets.

The mass media, as it has happened many times before, have exhibited a lack of expected responsibility in the case of the Metropolitan John. They have made a rarely seen pursuit against the person of Metropolitan John, presenting records that have nothing in common with the truth. They informed that Metropolitan John was a spy of the intelligence services of the neighbouring countries, although they cannot reach a consensus concerning the question of which intelligence service he is affiliated to. They have, nevertheless, proclaimed him a traitor, a forsaken bishop, a Serb, a Greek, a Vlach etc. and unless they manage to prove these, as they still have not managed, they could be tried for slander, as is in every democratic society. Finally, after having failed at everything else, they "convicted" him to imprisonment for several years for financial misuses, even though he has not even been summoned for interrogation procedures. Utterly inhuman and without even a trace of guilt, some journalists in Macedonia wanted to wash off their own sins, falsely accusing the bishop of erring. This is how a spoiled conscience functions. First, it destroys the criterion of the conscience thus justifying its own sins. For if bishop John is so sinful, who is supposed to be a symbol of the Church unity, a symbol of moral purity, a symbol of courage and decisiveness in difficult times, when he is asked to witness for the truth of the Church even with his own blood if necessary, then it is far more justifiable for any under average person to be sinful, or an above average journalist. Hence the tremendous need to create a public opinion that the bishop John should not be a criterion for honesty, devoutness, bravery, determination and martyrdom. And still one is the shining of the sun, other that of the moon and different of the stars. The stars also differ in their splendour. The moon can shade the sun for a brief period of time, but it cannot cover it entirely and never could it replace it.

The Macedonian public must not ruin the criteria for its own existence and unity, spurred by the insanity of certain media, lead by A1 television whose owner is a Muslim and is guided by the motto that Allah is one (A1). It is basically pathetic and pitiful if one feels joy because a symbol of moral purity, a bishop, has weaknesses and faults. But if one wants to humiliate this symbol on purpose, to disparage or even destroy it, as it is the case with the mass media in the Republic of Macedonia against bishop John, then it is insanity, self-destruction of a nation which, just like every other nation, cannot ensure its existence without the criterion of love and justice, virtue, honesty and self-sacrifice. A1 television, which recently celebrated ten years of its existence, works tactically on the obliteration of

the religious consciousness of the Macedonian people. It might seem quite logical, bearing in mind that the owner of that television is a Muslim, but it is degrading that those poor souls, the so-called journalists of this TV station, sell their honour, conscience and love towards their fellow-men and towards their motherland. They have abused the Metropolitan John's name for days and months, without allowing him even 5 minutes to deny their accusations. That is the A1 recipe for democracy. Their cunningness is satanic. They want to shake all those who matter and who have capacity to guide people. On the other hand, without a trace of guilt for the schism they produce, in an allegedly refined manner they protect themselves from being accused of slander. They never admit that they, in fact, are a laboratory for construction of lies against the Metropolitan John, but instead they claim their information come from confidential sources. A number of people who had the opportunity to participate in the events that were presented on A1 television know and testify that not only is this television partial, but what is more, it has its own tactics for presenting lies in accordance with the old saying: a lie repeated one hundred times becomes truth.

Not only in Macedonia, but also in most of the countries from the former socialist regime, there is jeopardy of accepting mediocrity for their states' criterion. As far as mediocrities are concerned, they always fight against perfection, for knowing that they themselves lack the ability to achieve it, they also prevent those who are gifted. However, they do not always succeed in that: We clearly distinguish between Mozart and Sallieri as we do between Copernicus and Giordano Bruno and those who killed them, between St. John Chrysostom and the empress Eudoxia, between Christ and Pontius Pilate.

Not being well acquainted with the accusations against the bishop, which can be heard through the media about the financial misuses of Bishop John we think loudly: If Metropolitan John had done any financial misuses wouldn't he have had an additional motif to refrain from doing this great act, especially when political repercussions were sure to be expected? If he had been interested merely in his comfort, wouldn't he have "repented" when he was asked to do it by the Synod of the MOC? If his consciousness had not been spotless, though the media informed of his crimes excessively without any evidence, could he have decided to make a move which was certain to gain him a great deal of adversaries?

What concerns us most as an association of citizens aiming to inform the public about the needs of the rightless, the humiliated and the offended, as well as the unjustly persecuted, is that the case of Metropolitan John obtained political dimensions. More accurately, the case seems to have obtained only political dimensions in Macedonia. Instead of a church case it has become a political case. The judgement of the media in Macedonia was exclusively with political criteria. That leaves room for fear that the civil court in Macedonia, where democracy is still young, might judge him by political criterion. In that case, may God help him. For, if one has only a little knowledge of the history of the MOC, since its putschistic proclamation of autocephaly unrecognised by any Orthodox Church in the world, up to the present days, one can clearly see that not only the proclamation of its autocephaly is a political act but also the realization of the same is by means of pressure, political pressure and threats.

The deed of Metropolitan John represents a historical act both for the Orthodox Church in Macedonia and for the Republic of Macedonia in general. Such an act can only be equated with the possible membership of Macedonia in the EU or in NATO.

Your position on this issue is of great importance to us and we look forward to hearing from you at the above-given address.