



Orthodox Ohrid Archbishopric
Holy Metropolis of Veles and Povardarje

Protocol No. 73 од 09 Juny 2003

To His Eminence,
Metropolitan of Australia, kyr Peter
who still dwells in schism with the
worldwide Orthodox Church

Your Eminence,

The fullness of the Church is in its catholicity (unity), and there cannot be a Church unless it is catholic and unless it has the apostolic succession. This means that if one does not participate in the Council of the Church, it is just as if one does not participate in the Body of Christ. The Church has a gradation of the Councils, although all church Councils, provided they are canonical, have the same quality, they are the Body of Christ. The smallest Council, the Eucharistic one at the level of a local Church, headed by its local episcopo is a recapitulation of even the biggest Council of the Church, the Ecumenical Council. With such an ecclesiology the Church has confirmed the smallest Council (the local eparchy council) as fullness of the Church, just as, on the other hand, each Ecumenical Council ought to become local and accepted in every eparchy in order to have the significance of an Ecumenical Council.

The autocephaly or the autonomy should never be conceived as a disadvantage to the catholicity of the Church. If the autocephaly, or the autonomy, become a reason for disruption of the catholicity, then, what is their purpose? Neither one, nor the other is a dogma, as opposed to the catholicity, which is a dogma. This means that it should be a personal issue of each episcopo, even of each Christian, the extent to which his personal autonomy is opposed to the catholicity of the Church. If my autonomy is in conflict with the catholicity of the Church, I will be cut off from the fullness of the grace of the Holy Spirit until I reconcile with the Church.

This might seem to someone as if we wanted to teach lessons in ecclesiology to an episcopo, just as it is assumed was done by the delegates of the Assembly of the SOC, the gentlemen bishops Irineos of Backa and Ignatius of Branicevo, to the representatives of the Synod of the schismatic MOC, at the meeting in Skopje on 15/2 May 2003, but we believe that neither did they, nor does our humbleness do this out of vanity, but out of love for the Church, for the unity and for the orthodox faith.

We presume that you are not unfamiliar with the fact that St. Cyril of Alexandria, before he uttered the Twelve anathemas against Nestorius, warned him on several occasions and always addressed him as a brother and an episcopo. Thus, the Council, with utmost humbleness, left room for the bishops of the schismatic MOC, a period until 1st September 2003, to approach the unity with the whole Orthodox Church, and this is a fact of brotherly love, regardless of how you want to present it before the people. We say - before the people, and not - before the believers, because through your appearances on the media you prove that you have a need of a political support and

that the support of the believers is insufficient to you. We are forced to repeat that the Church in Macedonia after the Second World War became a political instrument. It causes us great pain that in this period after the fall of the totalitarianism it has failed to free itself from the political influence and to become a real Church, and the bishops, to become real bishops. Still, we are sure of one thing, certainly not out of our own experience, but out of the experience of the Church tradition, that never do the lies, the heresy and schism have a future in the Church. They disintegrate on their own, as they have no “logos of the being”, just as the evil has no logos of the being and therefore cannot enter the Kingdom of God.

It is hardly believable that you will convince anyone in Macedonia that the signatures of the three Metropolitan of the schismatic MOC on the Nis document were “scribbles”, just as you presented it at the press conference on the 29/16 May 2003. The history will always remember you as people who treaded on their own signatures. It is understandable that the episcopo might err and withdraw his word and signature, but what is the meaning of withdrawing from the participation in the unity of the Body of Christ, in the Council of the Church, in the communion of the holy in the Kingdom of God.

When an episcopo treads upon his own signature without a pang of conscience, then, the treading upon his own word is treated as a much smaller sin, or not as a sin at all. Probably before your conscience it is not sinful that you withdrew after our mutual agreement to approach the liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC. With an excuse just the same as the one for the explanation of the signatures on the Nis document, that these were all just scribbles. You withdrew from the struggle for the suspension of the Metropolitan Cyril, and you left us at the front line, but you should remember that it was exactly you who in June last year gave us the decisions and all the documentation concerning Cyril, only a couple of days before our trip to Belgrade, where we were supposed to make an arrangement about the liturgical and canonical unity on behalf of your name, on behalf of Metropolitan Nahum's as well as on behalf of our name. Since you renounced your own signature, it means nothing to you to deny this, but in the end, if we stand or if we fall, we do it before God and all the rest is “like a shadow, like a dream”.

We are very sorry that you force us to say that you are an utterly covetous person. Under some different circumstances, if we were not torn by the schism, we would have considered the very thought of this as a sin, and in fact we have fought with it for many years. If you are even somewhat sincere, which we doubt now, you should admit that from the moment you met us until now we have done nothing to hurt you. Even now, after everything that happened, we will be very considerate, but not sentimental. If it were about something unimportant we might have remained silent again. But this is a struggle about the faith, about the Church, about the truth; this is a fight against the schism, against heresy, against evil in general. For the sake of history, but even more, for the sake of the future, we refuse to keep quiet about the fact that you have always looked after your own interest. You have always dealt the affairs with petty calculations. We do not say that we have been forced to do anything. We could have been disobedient, but we believe the Lord remembers, even if everyone has forgotten, that we have always considered the blessing of the spiritual father to be God's will. That is why we said Amen even when we thought it was too early for us to be ordained for an episcopo. There had never been a better period in our life from the time when we carelessly attended our post-graduate studies in Greece, but we gave it up, as You said, for the benefit of the Church. Later, it became clear, to us as well as to many others, that in fact, you worked only for Your own benefit. But, even when we realized that, we remained consistent and we never objected, and we also believe that you recall that we stood by You up to Your last moment of hope that You will become an archbishop. By doing so we acquired a number of enemies, nonetheless, we never cared for the number of enemies we would acquire for a friend, especially for a spiritual father. Even if you shed a tear after reading these lines, we doubt that it would be clear to anybody but to God whether that tear would be out of sorrow, envy or repentance. It is most unlikely that this would happen out of joy. The true joy, Your Eminence, is absent from the lives of the schismatics and heretics. We were assured of this after living for many years with schismatics,

although never agreeing with that. We considered this a contagious disease that needed to be healed as soon as possible.

The only door leading to the healing waters is the repentance. There is no other entrance which pours out grace. Just have a look at some neighbours, who by not healing the schism with the right remedy, with repentance, practically never healed from it. The schism is a disease, and it is not much different from the schizophrenia, one might think that he is healthy, but in fact he is sick.

The level of the previously mentioned press conference as well as of Your appearances in the Bitola media was horribly low. Let the sociologists and psychologists prove whether this has always been your personal level or is this some sort of a super crisis. This is not as important as is the fact that you lied in public, Your Eminence, and this is what we are going to be judged for at the Last Judgement. Even if we wanted to forget, God will remember it, as it is a blasphemy against an episcopo of the Church of God. You lie, Your Eminence when You say that in the schism the holy sacraments are valid, You lie when You say that our humbleness is not allowed to perform the holy sacraments, You lie when You say that the larger Council has no right to abolish the decisions of the smaller Council, you lie when you say that we have no flock, you lie when you accuse us of criminal acts before the public without a single proof for that. You seem to forget that we do not own even a single shed, and that all that we have earned and inherited from our parents has been given to the Church, for which we live, breathe and exist. Unlike us, You buy houses and other real estates, You had thousands of euros at the bankrupt savings bank TAT, and all this is because you are “naïve” and “honest”. We shall be impertinent, but impertinence is not a sin for a man who is free before God, and we shall tell You that You did not enter the liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC and through it with the remaining Orthodox Churches only for petty, calculative reasons. You had not taken your salary from Australia for several years, so you could have lost it if you had done what we did. Immediately after the events that happened to us, you sold the Metropolis building in Melbourne in order to get the money for your salaries. You think that people are blind. But the most shameless of all is that You have forgotten that thirteen years ago You were accused of being a thief and a financial abuser, but we were with You then, for our friend was dearer to us than the facts. Only brotherhood and friendship cannot be bought, your Eminence, everything else has a price.

Beside all this, you accuse and publicly disparage other people, by name and surname, even before their guilt has been proven. By what church canons, even by what civil laws is it allowed to publicly defame a person, even before this person’s trial and conviction? Nothing will be able to pull together the malice and calumnies that You spread for the people of whom You claim to have participated with us in the “criminal acts”, Your Eminence, not even after it has been proven that they have been far more honest and dignified than You. It is equally difficult to collect feathers in the wind as it is to pull together the scattered calumnies and rumours spread out before the other people. You should be familiar with this from the ascetic practice of the Church.

Even if we were that big a “scoundrel”, as you want to present us to the public, even if we were a “thief” and a “schemer”, our sin would still be smaller than Yours, sir Peter, for by erring against the unity of the Church you are blaspheming against the Holy Spirit and this is something that cannot be forgiven in this world or in the world to come. Even if our humbleness has accumulated all the sins from this world, we do admit that we are a sinful man and pray to God to have mercy on us, we can never be blamed for the sin of the schism which is always treated as the sin of heresy. Unfortunately, you, Your Eminence, although being a much better person than my sinful self, are, even as we speak, a schismatic, which at the same time means that you are a heretic and because of your heresy of ethnophiletism none of the canonical Prelates of the Orthodox Church communicates with you. We, the episcopos, are writing the history, and up until this moment you have played a negative role in it. The mercy of God has given you a chance to repent, but this is up to You now. You have been positioned to lead God’s people, the Church, so do not leave the atheists and the enemies of the Church lead You wherever they please. Your own salvation and the salvation of the people, who have been entrusted to you, should not be put at stake

for any political or more “sublime” causes. There is nothing more sublime for the Orthodox than the Kingdom of God, and in it there is “neither Jew, nor Greek..., for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal.3:28). Actually, the fact that you do not have communion with any of the bishops of the Orthodox Church is because they do not see you as an Orthodox, and not because you are Macedonian. We are Macedonian, but an Orthodox, and everyone accepts us as such, and nobody has ever tried to change our nationality so far. However, if you are a Macedonian you cannot at the same time be a Slav. It is high time You decided what You are, and if You decide before Your conscience, then, all will accept You as such.

It is a general impression that your recent reactions in the media have been a panic reflection of your fear before the future, not for the Church, but for Your own skin, your Eminence. You have proven many times that Your own skin is much more precious to You than the Church. But, this time, you are fighting a battle with God above all armies, and not with the weak, sinful and unworthy Metropolitan John. You are fighting against the Church and that makes you a loser from the start. Without much hope that you will act according to our advice, still, out of our love for God, for the Church and the people, we are obliged to highlight to you that it is high time that you stopped obstructing the Church in its development. Unchain the temples and monasteries in the Bitola Metropolis, as well as the building of the Metropolis in Bitola. The property belongs to the Church which is recognized in the whole world, and not to the schismatics and heretics. What is more, you have no factual ownership over them. The building of the Metropolis has been built by the Bulgarian Exarchate, the temples of the Holy Virgin Mary and St. Nedela have also been built by the Bulgarian Exarchate, the temple of St. Dimitry was built by the Constantinople Patriarchate, the temple of the Holy Trinity was erected by the Russian immigrants and you cannot be an usurper without holding responsibility. You should be aware that the citizens of Bitola cannot stand you. Even if this is not important, the fact that the believing people do not say Amen to You is. Have you counted the number of the people who come at the Sunday Liturgy when you officiate? Even those who do come, they do that because we have no temple to officiate in and there is not enough room for everybody in the flat where we officiate. Soon there won't be a person in Bitola who wouldn't be able to recognize the true Church from the schismatic. As far as the clergy is concerned, they have already been divided and this will come out in no time. We feel sorry because if you do not withdraw peacefully, you will create many new scandals for which you will not have an answer at the Last Judgement.

Finally, we sincerely admit that we have written these lines with tears. Yet, we have great hope in the Living God, to Whom we serve, that this is not going to be a farewell letter, but a letter inspiring unity. If we had preferred parting, we would not have felt the need to write it. We would have done it in a much more “decent” manner. But, we consider the truth to be the only bridge for unity and communion, so this is why we would like to summon you to communion, certainly, only in the true faith, the Orthodox faith, for outside of it, there is neither communion, nor future.

With brotherly love in Christ, our Lord,

+ John
Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje
and Exarch of Ohrid,