

SPECIAL SESSION OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH ABROAD

The session of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad took place on May 14\27, 2011, in the chancery of the Church of All Saints of Russia in the city of Voronezh.

The following Synod members were present: the Most Reverend Agafangel, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York and First Hierarch and Chairman of the ROCA Synod of Bishops; the Right Reverend Sofroniy, Archbishop of St. Petersburg and Northern Russia; and the Right Reverend Afanasiy, Bishop of Vologodsk and Veliko-Ustyuzhsk.

The following were invited to attend the Synod session: the Right Reverend Ioann, Archbishop of Buinsk and Volzhsk; the Right Reverend Kirill, Bishop of Voronezh and Southern Russia; the Right Reverend Dionisiy, Bishop of Novgorod and Tver; and the Right Reverend Nikon, Bishop of Verkhoturia.

The Synod session began at 10:00 with the singing of “Christ is Risen...”

Archpriest Sergey Kondakov, Archpriest Mikhail Karpeev and Fr. Aleksandr Malykh are invited into the meeting room.

The Chairman asks the priests from the Izhevsk-Udmurtia diocese of the ROC MP, Archpriest Sergey Kondakov, Archpriest Mikhail Karpeev and Fr. Aleksandr Malykh, to speak before the bishops present at the session of the Synod of Bishops. The priests ask that they and their parishioners be accepted as parishes of the ROC Moscow Patriarchate under the omofor of the ROCA. The Chairman expresses his concern over the possibility of such an arrangement, as no such precedent exists to date in the canonical practice of the ROCA. The decision is a serious one. The Church Abroad in the past has tried to avoid interfering in the internal matters of the Moscow Patriarchate in the hope that conditions would change inside the Church. Since May 17, 2007, such a hope is no longer realistic. Since the Moscow Patriarchate deemed it possible to accept the ROCA(MP) into its ecclesiastical body, then we, it would seem, could do the same. Personally, the Chairman favors this idea as it would set a precedent that may be an important step forward to the possible convening of a Local Council of a free Russian Orthodox Church, since the three fundamental parts of the Russian Church (ROCA, the Catacomb Church and ROC MP) which once made up the entirety of the Church, would then be represented under the omofor of the ROCA. The Chairman stresses that he is not sure of the correct answer, but that is why the bishops have met here to make a correct decision together, as there are many arguments “for” and just as many “against.”

Archpriest Sergey Kondakov relates the history surrounding the decision of this group of clerics to make public their letter announcing they would no longer commemorate the Primate of the ROC MP and the subsequent events. The priest states that a large number of the faithful have remained loyal to their clerics and support them. Presently, they oversee two parishes, but a third or fourth may join them. The parishes are named in honor of the Holy Royal Martyr St. Nicholas and St. Sergius of Radonezh. A Regulation was adopted at a General Parish Meeting which dictates their religious activity. Fr. Sergey reads the leading points of the Regulation along with comments discussing their canonical and dogmatic aspects. He bases the request for a special status for their parishes in the need to deflect the charge that they are “abandoning the gravely ill part of the Russian Church,” the Moscow Patriarchate, and to avoid tempting the weak-willed and to avoid turning away the many faithful who could assume an active role in the fight to cleanse the ROC MP from its tendencies toward apostasy.

A lengthy and comprehensive discussion ensues among all present on the dogmatic, canonical and administrative details involved in the acceptance of the three priests under the bishopric authority of the ROCA and the determination of the status of their parishes. The clerics from Izhevsk are apprised of the traditional views of the ROCA on the question of grace in the mysteries of the Moscow Patriarchate, the rise of globalism, so-called “patristic legacy,” and other matters.

After resolving a series of questions, the Izhevsk clerics leave the meeting room to prepare an official request to be accepted under the omofor of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

The Chairman reads the agenda for the session.

Resolved: To approve the agenda for the Synod of Bishops session:

1. To review the request to join the ROCA.
2. To consider the matter of cleric Nikolay (Modebadze).
3. To discuss the matter of parishes in Ukraine under Bishop Iriney, Bishop of Western Europe.
4. To designate a Dean for the Sts. Cyril & Methodius seminary.
5. Other.

1. **The Chairman** reads a letter from the **Right Reverend Gregory**, Bishop of Sao Paulo and South America, on the matter. After the letter is read and discussed by the bishops, the Chairman proposes to issue a conditional Determination, which will be officially approved at the Bishops' Council.

Resolved: After reviewing and discussing the request, the Synod of Bishops RESOLVES: That until their status is decided at the upcoming Bishops' Council, the parish of Holy Royal Martyr Nicholas in Zavyalov, the parish of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Meshcheryak (Udmurtia oblast, RF), and priests Archpriest Sergey Kondakov, Archpriest Mikhail Karpeev and Fr. Aleksandr Malykh will be considered parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate within the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and temporarily under the authority of the First Hierarch.

2. **Discussed: Archbishop Sofroniy** tells of his trip to Georgia to visit the parishes under cleric Nikolay (Modebadze). A moleben was held at the parish in Poti. Archbishop Sofroniy notes that the local people and other clerics support cleric Nikolay (Modebadze). The overall impression was a good one and he feels that they can consider the proposal to consecrate cleric Nikolay (Modebadze) as a vicar bishop of Georgia.

Bishop Afanasiy agrees with Archbishop Sofroniy's good impression and adds that cleric Nikolay (Modebadze) is planning to start a parish in Tbilisi. Bishop Afanasiy believes that parishes started by cleric Nikolay (Modebadze) have the potential to be successful.

The Chairman provides the biography and ecclesiastical history of cleric Nikolay (Modebadze) and how he was consecrated a bishop by Archbishop Ambrose (Katamadze) of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Archbishop Ambrose had at one time asked to be received under the omofor of the ROCA, but was denied largely due to the efforts of Archbishop Mark (Arendt), who feared the bad effects it would have on relations between the ROCA and so-called "World Orthodoxy." The Chairman says it is not possible for ROCA to recognize the consecration of cleric Nikolay as bishop, since it occurred in the uncanonical jurisdiction of "Metropolitan" Raphael and it was performed not only by Archbishop Ambrose (Katamadze), but also "Bishop" Arseniy of that jurisdiction.

Bishop Dionisiy poses several questions in order to determine the possibility of exercising the maximum amount of ekonomia in accepting cleric Nikolay. The other bishops offer their views.

The Chairman underlines the need for a public and open consecration.

13:16 - Cleric Nikolay (Modebadze) is invited into the room.

The Chairman relates the findings of the bishops and their decision on this agenda point: he may be consecrated a vicar bishop to serve the ROCA parishes in Georgia.

Cleric Nikolay expresses the concern that his consecration as a bishop may trouble many of the faithful who received the Church Mysteries from him in the past and may lead them to question their sanctity.

The Chairman explains that all mysteries performed by cleric Nikolay in the past may not be questioned after he is accepted into the ROCA, as he was a cleric of the Georgian Orthodox Church at that time.

Cleric Nikolay agrees to be accepted into the ROCA on the terms proposed by the Synod of Bishops.

A title for the new vicar bishop is discussed.

Resolved: cleric Nikolay (Modebadze) will be named a vicar bishop of the Synod Chairman to serve the ROCA parishes in Georgia and will have the title “Bishop of Poti.” The consecration will be performed by Archbishop Sofroniy, Bishop Kirill, Bishop Dionisiy and Bishop Nikon in the All Russian Saints Church in Voronezh on May 16\29, 2011.

3. **The Chairman** discusses the matter of the Ukrainian parishes of Bishop Iriney. At one time, he kept the Chairman informed about the parishes and clerics in Ukraine, which Bishop Iriney was hoping to bring gradually into the ROCA. The Chairman allowed this but on certain terms that were not obeyed. Bishop Iriney has also exceeded his given authority and has acted in ways not permitted by the canons.

Bishop Dionisiy says he was present at the discussions about the Ukrainian parishes and the three priests when Bishop Iriney was accepted into the ROCA. The First Hierarch gave Bishop Iriney his permission at that time to temporarily tend to these parishes until the three priests would be ordained by the ROCA, as they received their previous ordination from the UOC KP. Bishop Iriney shied away from fulfilling these requirements and now finds himself involved in an escapade involving the church and politics. Without condoning his actions, Bishop Dionisiy asks that allowances be made for Bishop Iriney in light of his age (72), difficulties experienced in the past and his health issues.

All the bishops participate in a discussion of the matter.

Resolved: To limit the Right Reverend Iriney, Bishop of Lyon, to the bishopric See determined by the Council Declaration (the Western European diocese and the parish in Burnoye in Kazakhstan). All parishes served by him which are found in other dioceses must become part of those dioceses and administered by the bishops of those dioceses. Until they are accepted into those dioceses by those bishops, they are not to be considered part of the ROCA. Ordinations which took place in dioceses without the approval of the bishops of those dioceses and the Synod of Bishops will be considered invalid. Since Bishop Dionisiy was not able to attend this session, he is invited to explain the matter at the next meeting of the Synod of Bishops.

4. **The Chairman** proposes to sing “Eternal Memory” in honor of Archpriest Valeriy Alekseyev, the former Dean of the Sts. Cyril & Methodius seminary and a distinguished cleric of the ROCA, who passed on March 25 of this year, on the feast day of the Annunciation of the Holy Theotokos.

The bishops and all attendees sing “Eternal Memory” in honor of Archpriest Valeriy Alekseyev.

The Chairman proposes to name the Right Reverend Georgiy, Bishop of Bolgrad and Belgorod-Dnestrovsk as the Dean of the Sts. Cyril & Methodius seminary.

Resolved: To name the Right Reverend Georgiy, Bishop of Bolgrad and Belgorod-Dnestrovsk as the Dean of the Sts. Cyril & Methodius seminary.

The Request to accept the three priests of the Izhevsk-Udmurtia diocese of the ROC MP is presented. After the bishops listen to the reading of the Request and hold a short discussion, the **Chairman** proposes that along with this Request, an Act announcing the joining of these priests to the ROCA should be formulated and it should include a clear and precise declaration which dogmatic deviations of the ROC MP they renounce.

The bishops agree to the First Hierarch’s proposal.

5. **The Chairman** and the bishops discuss matters relating to the ROCA parish in the Washington, D.C. area.

Archbishop Sofroniy relates that a priest in his diocese, Fr. Georgiy Galets, has gone over to the Old Believer Church, which also baptized him.

The bishops note that such an action, baptizing a person a second time, is a blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

Archbishop Sofroniy proposes defrocking Fr. Georgiy Galets.

Resolved: To defrock Fr. Georgiy Galets, as he has rejected all ordinations performed over him by the ROCA.

Bishop Nikon discusses the issues in Ishim involving Hieromonk Ermogena and Fr. Sergey.

A discussion of the matter follows.

Resolved: To ask Archbishop Sofroniy to look into the matter and bring peace to parish life in Ishim.

The session of the Synod of Bishops concluded at 15:20 with the singing of “The Angel cried...”

+Metropolitan AGAFANGEL

+Archbishop SOFRONIY

+Archbishop IOANN

+Bishop AFANASIY

+Bishop KIRILL

+Bishop DIONISIY

+Bishop NIKON