

PATRIARCH ALEXIS OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA 5 May 2006 119034 Moscow, Chisty per. 5 No. 3145 TO HIS EMINENCE THE RIGHT REVEREND BASIL BISHOP OF SERGIEVO ADMINISTRATOR OF THE DIOCESE OF SOUROZH

Your Eminence, Dear Vladyka! I have taken note of your two letters, received within two weeks of each other. I fully approve the content of the first letter, in which you testify to your devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church, and give further details about the plan to build a new Russian church in London, and speak of your intention to make the forthcoming celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God and All the Saints as the Cathedral Church of the Diocese of Sourozh a more general church festivity and state your intention to invite bishops from all the dioceses of the Moscow Patriarchate in Western Europe, and speak warmly of the Most Reverend Metropolitan Kirill's readiness to preside at this festivity. Concerning your letter, dated the 2nd day after Easter, it is difficult not to be surprised at the striking difference in its content from your previous letter. It is the expression of a completely different assessment of the situation and offers different practical suggestions. We understand and sympathise with the difficulties arising from the new realities created in Great Britain as a result of the arrival over a short period of a mass of Russian speaking faithful, which you speak of in your second letter. Yes, the resulting situation is not easy, and represents a definite challenge for the Diocese and requires responsible pastoral solutions. But the division of the Diocese on national and cultural lines, which you suggest, cannot in any way contribute to a resolution of contradictions or to a healing of the existing painful manifestations and the strengthening of Orthodoxy in the British Isles. Divisions in the Russian Church diaspora have, as we know, occurred before. But in the twentieth century they were provoked by circumstances - the persecution and godless dictatorship in our country - which were a catastrophe for the Russian Church. What is more, these divisions, which were forced on us, were always conceived of as being temporary. Today, thanks be to God, they are being successfully overcome. We need only mention the fruitful development of the dialogue with the Russian Church Abroad. You, on the contrary, because of temporary tensions, propose to make permanent or long term a division of the flock. Dear Vladyka, you write of the development of the Diocese of Sourozh as following the vision of the late Metropolitan Anthony. It is this very development which we support and give our blessing to. The great achievement of the late hierarch was the creation of a multinational diocese, faithful to the tradition of the Russian Church, but open to new challenges in the conditions of life in Western Europe and free of any ethnic limitation. Under the omophor of Metropolitan Anthony Russian, English and other representatives of different nationalities, all felt themselves to be equally loved children of the one Mother Church, to which the late bishop was always faithful (including those times when this was extremely difficult), and to which he remained faithful to his death. We expected you, Vladyka, to continue the work of Metropolitan Anthony. We were assured of this by the late hierarch, who wished to see you as his successor. It was this 1 circumstance that to a large extent determined the decision of the Holy Synod to entrust you with the duty of administering the Diocese of Sourozh. You yourself repeatedly confirmed your desire to continue the work of Metropolitan Anthony, to follow his line as successor and maintain the same loyalty to the Mother Church. You were given the opportunity of confirming these intentions through action. We understand that you encountered difficulties. But a very considerable increase in the Russian presence took place in other dioceses of the Patriarchate of Moscow outside Russia, which also demanded that efforts should be made to maintain unity and the pastoral care of a varied and multilingual flock. Is it not bishops in particular who have care for the unity of the people of God? That is why your proposal to divide the flock entrusted to you by God along national and cultural lines and "distribute" the faithful into different jurisdictions deeply saddened me. Vladyka,

the issue is not your personal destiny but whether the ecclesiological legacy of Metropolitan Anthony can be preserved, and the work of his whole life continued. It is clear that the choice which you propose cannot in any way bring closer the prospect of the creation of a single and multinational Local Church in Great Britain and generally in Western Europe, nor can it contribute to the resolution of the problem of Church order in the Orthodox diaspora, which the Local Churches, including representatives of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, have for decades laboured to resolve. What you propose is not only a step backward. Going down the path of a multiplication of divisions we risk losing ecclesiological peace and stability in Universal Orthodoxy, and the eventual price will be new suffering for the flock. Vladyka, I pray that the Lord may protect us all from similar acts and the painful answer for them at the coming Judgment of God. As Patriarch, called to fulfil the duty of serving Church unity, I remind Your Eminence of your episcopal oath of allegiance and call upon you and the clergy and people of the diocese, to continue the labour of establishing and not dividing the Body of Christ. We will give you all essential cooperation and support in this. I am ready to receive you in a private meeting to discuss the existing difficulties and to determine further joint action. We intend to pursue the work of ordering Orthodoxy in Western Europe, bringing together in one body those parts of the Russian church which were previously divided, collaborating in brotherly action with other Local Churches with a diaspora, both here in Western Europe and in other parts of the world. You are aware of these intentions from my letter of three years ago, which was warmly supported by your predecessor, the late Metropolitan Anthony, and by you. The history of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in America, as well as our experience of participation in pan-Orthodox discussion of the problem of the diaspora, are clear witness to the absence in our Church of any selfish ambitions or nationalist prejudice and of our faithfulness to Apostolic principles. Dear Vladyka, The Russian Church suffered greatly during the last century from persecution by the godless, from the arrogance of schismatics, from the betrayal of false brothers. Through the prayers of the New Martyrs and all the saints the time for rejoicing has come, a time of coming together and renewal. It is a happiness for us that the Lord has granted us to live and to serve Him at this time. It is not always easy today either, but can one compare these "growing pains" with the trial by fire which our fathers went through? Therefore I ask you not to fear the trials, not to avoid the cross, but to multiply your labours for the strengthening of the Body of Christ.

With love in the Risen Christ (signed) + ALEKSII PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA 2

**Московский Патриархат Patriarchate of Moscow Сурожская епархия Diocese of Sourozh
Василий, епископ Сергиевский Bishop Basil of Sergievo Великобритания 94a Banbury Road
Оxford Oxford, OX2 6JT Ул. Банбери, д. 94a Great Britain Тел: (44) 1865 512701 Tel: (44) 1865
512701 Факс: (44) 1865 512882 Fax: (44) 1865 512882 Эл. Почта: sergievo@ntlworld.com E-mail:
sergievo@ntlworld.com 24 April 2006**

To His Holiness Alexis II Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Your Holiness! It is with great sadness that, after much prayer and reflection concerning the significance of recent events in the Diocese of Sourozh, I write this letter. I apologise for its being in English, but I did not want it to be translated into Russian until after it had been received by Yourself. When I accepted to be put forward as a possible successor to Metropolitan Anthony, I made it quite clear that I would strive to take the Diocese forward according to his vision. Metropolitan Anthony had for many years let it be known that he was working for a 'local' Orthodox Church in Great Britain. The Russian tradition was the vehicle that carried the Orthodox Faith, but it needed to become rooted in the local cultural reality.

As a result of his efforts, a community of a few hundred people in London in the 1950s became, by the time of his death, a small diocese with thirty parishes and eucharistic communities throughout the United Kingdom. The development of the Diocese and its gradual assumption of a British ethos followed closely the enculturation in Britain of the Russians of the 'first' emigration. Metropolitan Anthony also insisted that the Diocese was open to Orthodox of all nationalities and we have been conscious for many years that we are not simply 'Russian'. The Orthodox Faith is for all people. Our clergy in fact are mostly English-speaking, and many of them work in secular jobs to support their families. Over the past ten years, however, the demographic changes that have taken place in Britain have completely changed the character of the Russian Orthodox presence in this country. Before the collapse of communism in 1991, there were not more than 2,000- 3,000 members of the Diocese of Sourozh, a large majority of whom were Englishspeaking. Since then, however, some 250,000 Russian-speakers from the former Soviet Union have come to Britain. Approximately 100,000 live in London alone. It is altogether understandable that the Patriarchate should be primarily concerned with the care of these new arrivals. They require clergy who understand their background and their pastoral problems, and who can hear their confessions in their native language. Many of them also want to keep close ties with their homeland, and expect to do this, at least in part, through the Church. Unlike previous waves of emigration, they are now in a position to do so. You will be aware that a number of these new arrivals have expressed deep dissatisfaction with the Diocese of Sourozh in a campaign waged through petitions, open letters, on the internet and even in the press against myself and the clerical and lay leadership of the Diocese. The fact that the same issues are raised as when Bishop Hilarion was in Britain – loyalty to the Patriarchate, financial control, liturgical language and practice – indicates that these problems are structural and endemic. They are not a question of personalities. Nevertheless, it must be said that my assistant bishop, Archbishop Anatoly of Kerch, is completely out of sympathy with the vision and practice of the Diocese as this developed under Metropolitan Anthony. I need hardly remind you of the recent difficulties with Archpriest Andrey Teterin. Just before Holy Week the supporters of Father Andrey organised a 'withdrawal of labour' from the cathedral parish, causing considerable disruption. Even a superficial consideration of events since Father Andrey's talk on 3 December 2005 leaves no option but to conclude that there are elements in the Moscow Patriarchate that support those who have been seeking to undermine my authority in the Diocese and are interfering in my conduct of its affairs. Public claims to this effect have been made and have not been denied. **Members of the Diocese are encouraged by the DECR to think that if they are unhappy about anything, they should simply contact Moscow.** Such a situation is intolerable. It is also contrary to the principles of Orthodox ecclesiology, which prohibit the interference of one bishop in the diocese of another. It is with sadness that I therefore write to ask to be released from the Patriarchate of Moscow. You will understand, perhaps, what this means to me when I say that I first began attending the Divine Liturgy in parish belonging to the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1957 and have been faithful to that first calling ever since. Events of the last few years, however, both before and after the death of Metropolitan Anthony, have finally convinced me that the Diocese created by him in Great Britain and Ireland should now leave the Patriarchate of Moscow and become a Diocese of the Ecumenical Patriarchate with a status similar to that of the Archdiocese of Russian Parishes based in Paris. Your Holiness, you have made it clear that you believe the Russian Church is best understood as a single entity embracing both its members in Russia and those abroad. The jurisdictional divisions that exist outside Russia are therefore not fundamental and should be treated as temporary administrative expedients, brought into existence by the vagaries of history. This is confirmed by the fact that the West European Archdiocese under the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Patriarchate of Moscow are in communion with one another, and that negotiations are currently taking place to restore communion between the Patriarchate and ROCOR. If this is the case, however, it is only reasonable to acknowledge the

changes that have taken place in the Russian Orthodox flock in Britain and to accept that a restructuring of the Russian Orthodox presence in Britain is necessary. The new arrivals from Russia should continue to be the focus of attention of the pastoral work of the Patriarchate, while the Diocese of Sourozh, in the form in which it has developed over the years, should be allowed to align itself with the ecclesial entity that most resembles it, the Archdiocese of Russian Parishes that is based in Paris and forms part of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Diocese of Sourozh, now given a new name, would then continue to offer all the help it can to the new arrivals, while the Patriarchate would intensify its efforts to provide a Church home for the same people. There is no reason why cooperation should not be possible. Your Holiness, I am asking that you release me to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for the sake of the further development of Orthodoxy in Britain and Western Europe – and ultimately for the good and well-being of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Yours ever in Christ, BISHOP OF SERGIEVO Administrator Diocese of Sourozh