



234. August 10/23, 1976 Archdeacon Laurence

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father Panagiotes,

Evlogeite!

Thank you for your letter of July 6/19, and please forgive this belated reply. About the letter I can only say that we agree with virtually everything you say there. I would only point out that there is an important distinction between (1) identifying apostasy, warning about it, separating oneself from it—something which all Orthodox Christians must be doing; and (2) making formal declarations as to who precisely is a heretic or schismatic, as to when everyone in a given Local Church becomes responsible for the heresy of a church leader or leaders, breaking communion (on the whole-Church level), stating who is without grace, defining the precise relationship of our Synod to other “jurisdictions”—which is the business of bishops and councils (whether on a local or universal level).

In our Church our bishops and many others have made many statements and acts which fall under heading (1); but our bishops have made very few statements or acts regarding heading (2). We are not troubled by this; we do not see that it is necessary for anyone in our Church to become less zealous for true Orthodoxy if he knows that his bishops, while being clearly against the apostasy, prefer not to break off all communion with whole churches and jurisdictions until this becomes absolutely unavoidable. If you understand this, I see that there is no serious disagreement between us; and that is basically what we tried to communicate in our article.

We continue to regard the danger from the “right side”—which is a Patristic dictum and not an expression of party politics—to be quite real and menacing, and this opinion has been reinforced for us by recent communications we have received from respected members of the Old Calendar Church in Greece, who tell us that “correctness” has become a “disease” in Greece second in its spiritual harm only to the apostasy of ecumenism. What they refer to primarily, of course, is the Mathewites, who have now broken all communion with our Synod precisely because our bishops refuse to declare New-Calendar Mysteries to be without grace. But we see this harm also clearly in our own experience with converts, who only with great difficulty come to that loving trust of our bishops which is so necessary for healthy spiritual life. I do not believe our warning about this peril was untimely; but of course, perhaps it could have been better expressed.

We ask your prayers.

With love in Christ,



Seraphim, monk