

262. Feb. 14/27, 1979 St. Cyril, Equal to the Apostles

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father Basil [Rhodes],

Thank you for your letter, and please forgive this delayed response, which is partly caused by our recent snowstorms and other winter difficulties.

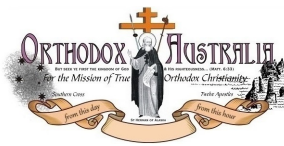
I was glad to see the kind tone of your letter, and I hope that we will continue to be on friendly terms. There are at times some unkind words exchanged by various people in both our “jurisdictions,” but the unfortunate phrases that sometimes come out in the heat of argument are best forgiven and forgotten. May God forgive us all for our careless acts of uncharity!

You know Anna much better than I know Timothy, and I am really not prepared to counsel him on his “maturity” or “immaturity” for marriage until I know him better; if he is to be baptized here by us, this counselling will come as he prepares for baptism and afterwards. The basic decision, of course, is up to them, and if they do choose to marry, they will probably come to a harmonious resolution of the “jurisdiction” question also.

The disharmony between our Church Abroad and your OCA is perhaps not as drastic as you may think. It is true that we (for the reasons I will mention below) would not consent to concelebrate, as things now are, with priests of your jurisdiction; but we do not deny the grace of your Sacraments any more than you deny ours, and we regard the giving of Holy Communion to lay members of the OCA as a pastoral rather than a “canonical” question. The issues that separate us are so complex (at least in our days when the general church consciousness is so low) that most laymen simply cant be expected to grasp them. Our own spiritual children, I will tell you frankly, we do discourage from receiving communion in OCA churches, trying to arouse in them a more conscious attitude to the Orthodox Church situation today.

What is this church situation that separates us? It has two aspects:

(1) Recognition or non-recognition of the Moscow Patriarchate as the normal and legitimate Orthodox Church of Russia. The Metropolias reception of “autocephaly” and “canonicity” from Moscow in 1970 (which is now the chief “official” reason for the strained relation between us) seems to us an example of crude “legalism”: the reduction of Orthodoxy to a purely outward question of church forms, no matter what alien spirit might be using those forms. (This is the sin of “Sergianism.”) The episcopate of the Moscow Patriarchate is the puppet of an atheist organization (the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) whose aim is the destruction of the Church; granting full and normal recognition to it (whatever ones aims in doing this) means giving aid to this alien



organization and its purpose, and crushing the spirit of those in Russia itself who are trying to preserve the genuine Orthodox view of church life and organization (the “True Orthodox” or “Catacomb Church” of whose present existence we have many proofs). The over-abundant journeys of OCA clergy to the USSR are propaganda fodder for the enemies of Orthodoxy (religious enemies first, not political). Perhaps you may think this difficult to understand, or far-fetched; I am sending you some back copies of our Orthodox Word which explain various aspects of the issue, from the words of hierarchs and laymen in Russia.

(2) The second question is the path of ecumenism-modernism which the leaders of “world Orthodoxy” (led by the Patriarch of Constantinople) are pursuing, and from which the OCA has shown no indication of separating itself. This is another complex question, going back (like the Moscow question) to the 1920 s, but becoming clearer than ever in recent years. This path is a tragic betrayal of Orthodoxy, which differs from the betrayal of Florence in the 15th century only in that it is not yet complete; but it [letter ends]