



271. June 1/14, 1979 Martyr Justin the Philosopher

Categories : [Letters](#)

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Dear Father Yves [Dubois],

Christ is in our midst!

We received your note of alarm and hasten to reply. Not knowing the specific nature of your encounter with Archbishop Vitaly, as well as the other problems you have had in the last three months, I will only give you our impressions both of the article you enclosed and of Archbishop Vitaly in general, as we know him.

The article struck both of us as extremely unrealistic, rather elitist and snobbish, and obviously written by someone with very little real experience in the missionary field. It corresponds not at all to the realities of missionary labor in our Church.

Why then was it written? I would guess, knowing Vladika Vitaly: it expresses chiefly the personal jealousy of Vlad. V. for the successful missionary labors in our Church which he would like to be heading himself, but is not. We noticed years ago that Vlad. V. has had not a single good word to say of the labors of our Brotherhood, for example. He sometimes justifies this privately by saying that we are in “prelest” for our veneration of Vladika John; but it is actually, I think, out of jealousy because he has been unable to do much in the mission field himself, despite his talk about it. Lately he seems to have developed the same jealousy for Fr. Panteleimon and his missionary labors. The article seems to be his “sour grapes”—since the convert movement in our Church is not under his control, it is not really very good. (All this began with him years ago, when he had great hopes that Timothy Ware would remain with him and put his—Vlad. Vitaly's—missionary plans into action. After all his failures in this direction, he has gotten sour on converts in general, and neither trusts nor understands them.)

Both of us in our personal contacts with Vlad. V. have found him cold and pretentious, and totally lacking in the warmth and Christian love of someone like Vladika John Maximovitch, who inspired a spontaneous missionary movement just by these qualities, without Vladika Vitaly's pretensions to be a “theologian,” etc.

All of this I write not out of any bitterness toward Vladika Vitaly (who has never caused us personally any trouble at all, apart from our disappointment that he never supported our work), but only so that you might not have any false picture of him or false hopes in him; he does not represent what our Church stands for and stands outside the vital currents in our Church, whether Russian or convert (the Russians, for example in Jordanville, have no more rapport with him than



we do). He happens to be “powerful” in the Synod—but this is largely a superficial thing, having to do with church politics and hardly affecting at all the grass roots labors of such as you or we.

We are puzzled as to what Vladika Vitaly can possibly mean when he says that this very unsuccessful article has become “Synod policy.” Of course, it has become no such thing; and in any case, the article presents no proposals or programs as such and only expresses one mans reflections (rather poor ones) on the question. What Vlad. V. probably means is that the Bishops listened to the report and expressed their appreciation of it without thinking at all of any practical consequences of it. The Bishops could not but have noticed the total impracticality of implementing any such ideas, since almost every diocese (certainly in this country) already has well-developed church services in the English or other non-Russian languages, and Vlad. V. himself must often have been present at such services.

Please let us know of your more specific ecclesiastical difficulties. We could talk to our Vladika Anthony, but so far there is nothing specific enough to talk about. Is anybody really trying to stop you from having services in English?

I hope you understand that one does not have to take very seriously some of the things our bishops say—that is, sometimes some of them say things just to “save face” or protect their sense of authority, and no one, least of all the bishops themselves, expect such statements to be put into practice. And please don’t let Vlad. Vitaly’s coldness upset you. We would advise you to stay as far away from him as possible—he doesn’t have the right spirit at all, and is more concerned with church politics than the real needs of the flock today.

We ourselves have had complete freedom in developing our American mission. Our services both in the monastery and in our missions are almost entirely in English, and Vladika Anthony when he visits makes a point of encouraging us to do everything in English, and he himself does as much as he can in English. This is certainly the “normal” attitude of our bishops, and Vlad. Vitaly’s remarks are surely atypical.

Please write us more, and don’t become discouraged. Pray for us.

With love in Christ,
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim