



296. Oct. 14/27, 1980 Elder Nazarius of Sarov

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Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father Photios,

May the blessing of the Lord be with you!

Thank you very much for the invitation of the Orthodox Conference to be a speaker at the 1981 Conference in Pennsylvania. I am honored and grateful.

However, next summer will be a very busy one for me. At just about the same time as the Pennsylvania Conference, I will be giving a talk at the Russian-language Conference of our Church in San Francisco, and right after that will be the preparations for our local St. Herman Pilgrimage, for which I have to prepare both a talk and a whole course.

Therefore, please forgive me, but I must respectfully decline the invitation to speak at the Pennsylvania Conference.

You mentioned in your letter the “misunderstandings” which have arisen within our Russian Church Abroad. I have been watching the development of this process for a good eight years now, and I regret to say that, in my opinion, the divergence has now become so deep that no mere meeting at a summer conference is going to change things a bit. Representatives of both “sides” (or those who might be identified as such) could meet and be polite to each other, but the actual differences are too deep and subtle to be discussed” with any profit. The underlying issue, I think, is one of trust vs. distrust of our Russian Orthodox Church and tradition. But to name only one specific difference: Since Fr. Panteleimon will be present at the Conference, it is obvious that no public prayers will be offered for Fr. Dimitry Dudko, Fr. Gleb Yakunin, and other suffering and imprisoned clergy who, while officially in the Moscow Patriarchate, by their statements and actions are (as Bishop Gregory has written) “our brothers in one and the same Church.” To be frank, I would be very uneasy and troubled to participate in services at which I knew that such prayer could not be offered and warm defense and support of these clergy could not be given without making one a cause of “controversy” and even disrupting the “peace and harmony” of the Conference. This is in spite of the fact that the English-speaking people in our Synod, in my experience, are very well disposed to give such prayer and support—until they are told by someone in an apparently responsible position that such persons are “heretics” and can’t be prayed for. I don’t see any easy answer to this problem, but I do see how the lack of prayers offered for our suffering brothers cripples us.

But that is between us. I really will be very busy this summer and will barely be able to keep up with



the obligations I already have.

We will be glad to send you information and photos of our monastery, as well as samples of our publications, for your display; please tell us what is needed and we will send it.

Asking for your prayers,

With love in Christ,
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim