



305. Jan. 17/30, 1981 St. Anthony the Great

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear John [Hudanish],

May the blessing of the Lord be with you!

I received your letter with its clear message: either we do things your way, or you kick us out! Of course, you view it differently: that you are standing up for correctness, Orthodoxy, etc., and this is your duty since the clergy don't seem able to do it. This is a pitfall into which very many, especially among converts, have fallen.

In your case, I have seen this coming for a long time, and your letter was not a surprise to me. The devil often attacks in this way: because the singing at the last Liturgy in Woodburn was quite prayerful, the devil chose precisely this point to destroy the services in Woodburn, picking as his instrument someone who allows himself to become excited over matters which he does not fully understand. In place of the prayerful singing which is of the same sort that is sung in virtually all the churches of our Russian Church Abroad (including Jordanville in the time of Archbishop Averky—which should at least make you pause and think that perhaps you haven't fully understood what he was saying about church singing)—you would force everyone to obey the dictates of an inexperienced, spiritually immature layman.

It is a real catastrophe, both for the parish and for you personally. But perhaps you can use this opportunity to examine and criticize your own conduct in the past year or two. You have alienated and offended so many in Woodburn, as well as three priests who have travelled from far to serve there. Can it really be that you alone are righteous and Orthodox, and everyone else stands in need of correction by you? Some months ago, when I hinted to you on the phone that Fr. Herman had the distinct impression from you that you didn't want him to come back, you seemed surprised that you could have given such an impression; but the fact that now you've kicked us both out does indeed confirm that you do not consider us welcome (except under terms of your dictation).

Read pages 81-84 of Unseen Warfare, and any other passages there on the perils of trusting oneself, in order to see the pit you have dug for yourself.

To answer your ultimatum specifically: No, neither Father Herman nor I will serve in your chapel under your conditions or under any other conditions you may set, because: (1) the order of church services, singing, and everything else having to do with the conduct of worship is the sphere of the priest who serves, not laymen (a point about which Archbishop Averky was very emphatic); and (2) the particular conditions you wish to impose who chase out the Russians for whose sake the



services have been organized, and not least of all because of the disrespect for legitimate church authority which you are displaying. I am deeply sorry that you do not seem to realize this or to care whether it be so or not.

Please forgive me for all in which I have failed you as a spiritual father. Seeing your immature state and your resistance to what I have tried to teach you, I have given you little; your ultimatum is a clear revelation of a lack of Christian awareness, sensitivity, and struggle. May God grant that you can still come to your senses and change! Do you remember a phrase which, some years ago, I thought you understood?— “He may be Orthodox, all right, but is he a Christian?” Take it to heart and finally begin to work on yourself—you will be surprised then to see how others seem to change also!

With love in Christ,
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim

p.s. The article in the latest Orthodox Word on “Super-Correctness” should also help you, if your heart is open. Bishop Laurus of Jordanville (a faithful disciple of Archbishop Averky) just wrote to thank us for this article, which he considers just what’s needed today. You aren’t the only one with this problem!