



306. Jan. 24/Feb. 6, 1981 Hieromartyr Clement of Ancyra

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear James [Paffliausen],

May the blessing of the Lord be with you!

It was good to hear from you and of your reflections; although your situation may seem confusing to you right now, the thinking and evaluating you are forced to do are all for the good and will be profitable in the long run.

I think the jurisdictional problem is not really as big as it may seem to you right now. While there are some in our Russian Church Abroad (most notably the Greeks you have come to us from the Greek Archdiocese and “overreacted” to the whole situation) who want to make the Synod the exclusive and only Orthodox body left in the world, the prevailing opinion in our Church is not at all so exclusivistic. I think the realization is increasing among us that we must speak for and to all Orthodox who want to preserve their Orthodoxy, and that we should be slow in drawing absolute lines between jurisdictions. There is still a measure of partial communion between us and the other jurisdictions: for the most part there is no clergy concelebration (although even this does exist to some degree in a few places), but there is a good amount of communion on the lay level, usually left up to the discretion of the local priest. This whole attitude presupposes that there is indeed grace in the Mysteries of the “canonical” jurisdictions, and that the heresies of a few hierarchs have not yet completely infected their Churches. Our refusal to have full communion with the other jurisdictions comes from the need to make a basic distinction between the disastrous, even suicidal path they are following, and our own attempt to stand in the truth and keep the tradition.

Regarding the Moscow Patriarchate, I think our article on Father Dimitry Dudko in a recent *Orthodox Word* (sent to you together with *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*) explains this rather clearly.

As an example of our own attitude to other jurisdictions: your idea for us to have a “retreat” for students at the University presents no real problem for us. We could have Vigil and Liturgy and a series of talks under only one condition: that we not have to concelebrate with clergy of any other jurisdiction. We could give confession and communion to any Orthodox person, although here at the monastery we would be more restrictive and would treat each case separately. Our talks at such a “retreat” (actually we should have a better name for it!) would not concern jurisdictions (although we could answer any questions people might have about them). Actually, we would love to have such a weekend there, and I am sure our Archbishop would bless it. If it is really possible, please give us some idea of the facilities available, the amount of time people might be willing to



devote to it, (the whole of Saturday and Sunday, or less?), the level of the participants (mostly non-Orthodox?), etc. It would be most convenient if the weekend be not the first or second of the month, when we have mission services in our parishes here. I am sure Fr. Alexey Young of Orthodox America would also like to participate.

Regarding the OCA and our Russian Church Abroad: I think it is frankly impossible for you to hope to change the OCA; it is only individuals and small groups there that can really hope to escape the main current of modernism, ecumenism, etc. But I can't tell you: "Come to the Synod and all your problems will be solved." You should be aware that we have our own problems and politics too, before you make this decision. Actually, our main problem is not "fanaticism" (regarding other jurisdictions as heretical, or without grace, etc.)—this is a minority view which most of us don't accept, and it only hinders the preaching of the Orthodox Gospel in America. The main problem I think you would find is the un-missionary attitude of many of our parishes, which are satisfied just to keep their Russians and don't reach out to others. But this is changing; the younger priests are almost all at least somewhat mission-oriented, and I myself as a convert have never really had a problem with this. Any convert who is willing to struggle for it can find an outlet for his missionary zeal. If you wish to be a priest in the world, you will not find an English-language parish ready to support you, but the very struggle involved in establishing yourself could be very fruitful for the deeper Orthodoxy that is so needed today.

From what I hear, St. Vladimir's Seminary is not very conducive to keeping or developing any kind of traditional Orthodoxy. Our seminary at Jordanville requires some Russian (although less with each passing year—many of the graduates now do not have a fluent command of the language and write papers and tests in English). If you already knew some Russian, you could finish the course there in three years (it gives a BTh). It is conceivable that a semi-correspondence course could be worked out for theological courses in English, but for this they would want to know you personally.

Pray to God (and to our Archbishop John) and He will show you the way. We would be glad to talk with you more about these questions. Please let us know about the possibilities for a weekend at the University. (The second or third Sunday of Lent would be a good time.)

With love in Christ,
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim