



## 317. Sept. 25/Oct. 8, 1981 St. Sergius of Radonezh

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Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father Michael [Azkoul],

Christ is in our midst! He is and shall be!

Thank you for your letter. May God forgive you—and please forgive me if I have offended you in any way.

With you personally I have never felt any animosity on either side; some disagreements, perhaps, but not ill will. I do think your sermon printed recently in Orthodox Christian Witness went too far in its inferences about those who sympathize with certain priests in the Moscow Patriarchate—none of us condone the Patriarchate itself, but we share the position so well set out by our Synod in its recent decree on the “Elder Tavron” uproar.

But his same decree does indeed use the word “schism” to refer to those over-quick to criticize others, even their own Metropolitan, and I think the danger, now becoming more obvious, has indeed long been present in our midst. I really think that this problem is now so deep that no personal forgiveness can uproot it. What is really required, I think, is the total eradication of the clique in our Church, centered around the person of Fr. Panteleimon in Boston, that thinks it knows better than our bishops and our whole Church tradition what the teaching of the Church is. Every major disturbance in our Church in recent years has come from the clash between the opinions of Fr. Panteleimon and the teaching of the Church, which are often two different things. We and many others are quite willing to live in peace with those who have different opinions on various church matters; but if they insist that the opinions are the teaching of the Church, a clash and eventual schism is inevitable. (By “eradication,” of course, I don’t mean that its members should be “executed,” but only that they cease to operate as a “pressure group” in the Church and learn to humble themselves before the teaching of the bishops and the Russian Church in general.)

I sincerely hope the recent statement of our bishops on the “Elder Tavron” article will serve to meaken the critics of our Church teachings and policies. If so, there is hope for peace.

With love in Christ,  
Unworthy Hieromonk Seraphim