



324. March 26/April 8, 1982 Archangel Gabriel

Categories : [Letters](#)

Date : October 10, 2016

Dear Father Vladimir,

Christ is in our midst!

Archbishop Laurus has written Father Herman, enclosing Nina Berchier's letter to you requesting you to perform her marriage with Andrew Kencis, and asking Father Herman to discuss with Archbishop Anthony her freedom for marriage (since she was for a time a ryassophore nun). Father Herman has not yet talked with Vladika Anthony about this, but in the meantime I would like to tell you our view of the matter, since Father Herman and myself have had Nina and Andrew as our spiritual children for some time—in fact, ever since I baptized them both (Nina in 1978, and Andrew in 1981).

The main problem, as I see it, is not that Nina was a ryassophore nun. She did not take vows and so could be free to marry. We are very disappointed that she allowed herself to be tempted away from the monastic life, but that is something she has to decide for herself.

The main problem, however, is this (which she did not mention in her letter to you): In her younger years, when she was living a rather loose life, she had an operation performed on her (I forget what it's called) to make her sterile. She therefore wishes to enter into marriage with no possibility of bearing children. For her to marry Andrew, who is just at the age to begin raising a family, would be a sin and a mockery of the very rite and meaning of marriage. This is all the more true in that Andrew is so young and immature (at least seven years younger than she, and immature for his age). We can only see that she is taking advantage of his immaturity to draw him into a fruitless union that cannot have God's blessing and will not bring them happiness—certainly not Andrew, who needs precisely the responsibilities and difficulties of raising children for his own salvation.

A further consideration is the fact that they wish to be married so soon, when before January of this year they knew each other only from a few meetings after Ninas return from Chile last summer (and at that, the romance developed while Nina was still wearing the ryassa and klobuk!). This only confirms the fact that their attachment for each other is a result of a "rebound" from Nina's disappointment over her monastic failure, and not something which has been deeply felt and thought through.

I sympathize with Nina's search for happiness after her failure at monasticism—but this isn't the way! It's a passing temptation, and although they undoubtedly see it all as God's plan for them, to us it has been too clearly a typical trick of the devil, working on human feelings, to get two people



out of monasteries (Andrew was no more than a monastery laborer, but he did return to us last fall with the idea of monasticism in mind, and during his stay with us he was noticeably maturing; if he had stayed longer he would have been better prepared for a fruitful life in the world).

I hope things are going well for you in the parish there. Please pray for our struggling communities and missions—there are many trials, but also many joys. **GOD IS WITH US!**

Wishing you a joyous Pascha,

With love in Christ,