



NEW YORK: 16 May 2011
**The Epistle of the Synod of Bishops
of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia**

We hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia have gathered for the meeting of the Synod of Bishops at the Synodal Residence in the city of New York, which God has preserved. In the presence of our Protectress, the Kursk Root Icon of the Mother of God, we address the Paschal greeting to our beloved flock: “Christ is Risen!” Today, beloved brothers and sisters, the radiant feast of feasts continues both in Heaven and on earth. Once more we repeat those wondrous, triumphant words from the Paschal service: “This is the day which the Lord has made: let us be glad and rejoice therein.”

Since the last Synod of Bishops and specifically last autumn, there has taken place an anniversary which is significant not only for the Church in the Diaspora but also for the pages of Russian Church history. This was the 90th anniversary of the canonical establishment of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. On 6/19 November 1920, in view of the Imperial City of Constantinople, there stood at anchor over a hundred and twenty-five ships containing a great mass of 150,000 Russian refugees from the Crimea. On board the *Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich*, outside Russia, the first meeting of the Higher Church Administration for the South of Russia took place. This laid the foundations for our Church outside Russia.

This meeting was presided over by our Abba, Metropolitan Antony (Khrapovitsky) of blessed memory. This year marks the 75th anniversary of his righteous repose: the founder of the Russian Church Outside Russia departed to the Lord on 28 July / 10 August 1936, a day the Church commemorates the appearance of the Smolensk Icon of the Mother of God, called the ‘Odigitria’ – ‘She Who Shows the Way’. If the Lord gave His Holiness Patriarch Tikhon the Confessor the task of resisting all the efforts of the forces of the Antichrist, ‘to hold the Russian Church firmly with the Cross’, as St John of Shanghai was later to say, ‘upon the surface of Russian life,’ then Metropolitan Antony had a different challenge: he was entrusted with preserving the Russian Church in the Diaspora, which has been the essential ministry of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

This ministry, the mission of the Church Outside Russia to give spiritual nourishment to the

Russian Orthodox people outside their homeland and to preserve the traditions of the Russian Church, continues today. At the same time, by Divine Providence, not only is our flock not growing smaller, but it is actually growing larger: over the last two decades, the overwhelming majority of our parishioners today are actually those who for one reason or another have found themselves outside the borders of Historic Russia. This circumstance illustrates that the ministry of the Church outside Russia is by no means over. At the same time, the spread of the light of Orthodoxy among the peoples of all the lands where our Church exists continues as an inseparable part of our mission.

Still, the Churching of Russian people, as well as the preservation of Russian Church Tradition, is a task of obedience for all of us in the Diaspora and part of the ministry of the Church inside Russia. We know that the rebirth of Rus' as the House of the Most Holy Mother of God and the spreading of the Orthodox Faith among the people is important for the future not only of Russia, but also of the whole world, in whose destiny the Lord has granted Russian civilisation a special place.

Over the last few years we have witnessed fatal floods, terrible earthquakes and hurricanes, which instantly and massively destroy human achievements. We observe with sorrow the death of many people at the hands of their brothers, the wicked destruction of the traditional family, centuries-old cultural ways which are literally dying in front of our eyes. This instability and infirmity of all things which seem to us so fundamental reminds us that, as Russians say, we all walk under God, and no one who lives on earth knows when the Lord will call us, but all this is the fulfilment of the words of the Saviour about the signs of the times.

For this reason we must be especially attentive to our salvation, for 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up', as the holy Apostle warns the faithful (2 Peter 3, 10).

And we, dear brothers and sisters, shall not fear, even as 'the earth be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea' (Psalm 46, 2), for we rightly believe that the Lord did not appoint our present world for the eternal life of renewed mankind, but in fact other dwelling-places which shall have no end.

The work of our Synod concludes on the very day when four years ago, an important event took place, when all who love Holy Russia saw God's Will revealed with their own eyes: the Act of Canonical Communion with the Russian Orthodox Church, at home and abroad, was signed. Those to whom the Lord had entrusted the helm of the Russian Church, that is, His Holiness Patriarch Alexis II and the First Hierarch of the Russian Church Outside Russia, Metropolitan Laurus, both of blessed memory, were to overcome the many obstacles to the path of Church Unity. But firmly believing that Unity is pleasing to God and it is a saving destination towards which to steer the Ship of the Church, they acted in accordance with Divine instructions, which have brought much good fruit.

At a time when the world, to its sorrow, has lost all understanding of the cornerstone of the Christian Feast of the Passover of Christ, for us Orthodox Christians it remains the prototype of

the future, eternal Passover, for in the words of the Holy Apostle Paul, “and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15, 14).

Christ is Risen Indeed!

+ ***Hilarion,***

*Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia
and the Members of the Synod of Bishops.*

1/14 May 2011