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Северо-Американская Епархія
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Епископъ Стефанъ Трентонскій и Северо-Американскій

ANNOUNCEMENT TO ALL CLERICS & FAITHFUL OF THE NORTH AMERICAN DIOCESE

Since the time that our diocese changed over to autonomous self-governance, Archbishop Tikhon and the RTOC Synod are resorting to every possible measure, to the point even of false accusations, in order to hold on to their control over our Diocese Abroad and parishes in the Abroad.

Without having a lawful cause, on November 2nd of this year the RTOC Synod decided to issue a false edict: “For violating your oath, as expressed through receiving under your omophorion the clergy of Omsk and those who have joined them... the Synod of Bishops has adopted a decision to retire you without the right to serve.”

I did not receive a single Omsk clergyman under my omophorion. All the Omsk clergy, verbally and in writing bear witness to this, while all three hierarchs of the Synod, Archbishops Benjamin, Tikhon and Bishop Savvaty (as well as their secretary, Fr. Viktor Melehov) know that I never issued any edicts concerning the acceptance of these clergy. This accusation is not a blunder. This is a deliberate fabrication in order to achieve their objectives. Through this deliberate false accusation they themselves have become violators of their oath, brazenly trampling upon their oath to be **honest and faithful** servants of the TRUTH. Until such time that they repent, they cannot call themselves lawful and truthful clergy because of their NEOSERGIANIST action and are therefore subject to be deposed for falsehood and deceitfulness.

“Do not bear false witness against your neighbor”. The violation of the 9th Commandment is a serious crime for any Christian, but here **Hierarchs** of the RTOC have colluded in presenting false witness to the faithful, in order to get rid of a loyal servant of the altar of God. The Synod of Archbishop Tikhon had no right, without initially summoning an ecclesiastical tribunal, to ban his fellow bishop from serving in the Church in order to seize control over the chair and parishes of North America. Bishop Gregory (Grabbe) considered bans or depositions to be invalid if they are not performed in the lawful, canonical manner. The Holy Canons require that those who face possible defrocking, must *be thrice summoned to face the Synod to provide an explanation for their behavior*. As is evident from the edict, the Synod did not offer me anything of this sort.

Can it be considered that the RTOC Synod neglected to fulfill this canonical obligation through ignorance or forgetfulness? Hardly. The last day of their Synod of Bishops meeting (November

4th of this year) was marked by the appearance of yet another document: “**Clarification of the canonicity of the acceptance of Protopresbyter Viktor Melehov as a member of the RTOC**”. In this resolution the Synod concludes that the defrocking of Prot. Viktor Melehov was unlawful, since he was “not summoned thrice to appear before the Synod with an explanation of his reasons for entering into schism”!?

What conclusion must the faithful come to regarding the bishops of the Synod of the RTOC? That suspending Bishop Stefan without a three-fold summons to appear before the Synod is **permissible**, but in the case of Fr. Viktor Melehov it is **impermissible**?!

Yet; they accuse **me** of violating church ethics?!

The Synod under the Chairmanship of Archbishop Tikhon, instead of coming to their senses and undertaking measures to halt the sad collapse of the RTOC, the Synod brazenly *continues what it started*. In the last few days, Secretary V. Melehov informed our clergy that the Synod appointed their adherent, Protopriest Joseph Sunderland dean of the diocese with the right to manage my North American Diocese. This will not be, just as there will be no further discussions, while the RTOC Synod does not repent for falsehood and violation of the Holy Canons. In my last communique with the Synod of Bishops, I asked that they «leave us alone». It is now obvious that they have no intention of doing this.

In order to halt the unlawful seizure of our Abroad churches and communities, and in the interest of peace instead of rancor, I announce that I am withdrawing from subordination to the unlawful management of the RTOC Synod. None of their resolutions are acceptable and all those under the omophorions of Arch. Tikhon, Arch. Benjamin or Bp. Savvaty are forbidden to serve in the North American Diocese or to disturb the faithful with verbal or written communiqés.

May the Lord deliver us all from the snares of the enemy.

+*Bishop Stefan*

13/26 November, 2016
St. John Chrysostom