



Glory be to God, It Is Accomplished!

«Behold, what is so good or so beautiful,

As for brethren to live together?» (Ps.132.1)

On the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman (May 14, 2017) in the Church of St. Sergius of Radonezh in Valley Cottage (New York), a long-awaited event took place: the concelebration of the Divine Liturgy by the two hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad: Archbishop Andronik (Kotliaroff) of Syracuse and St. Nicholas and Bishop Stefan (Sabelnik) of Trenton and North America in conjunction with the clergy of both dioceses.

The significance of this event cannot be overestimated.

First, both Vladykas have dedicated their lives to serving God and their people, having been in the Church Abroad for many years. They are both graduates of the Jordanville Holy Trinity Seminary, studied and were brought up under the guidance of the great founding fathers in the special philosophical and Orthodox theological mentality of the “Church Abroad”.

Secondly, both were consecrated bishops at about the same time (albeit in different jurisdictions) in the face of the terrible danger of the dissolution of our native ROCA in a treacherous unification with the unrepentant Moscow Patriarchate.

Thirdly, both hierarchs are consistent anti-ecumenists and anti-modernists with vast pastoral experience.

Fourthly, both govern dioceses in the vast territory of North America, and with the present unity around the Chalice of Christ's Love, in the Holy Presence of God, shoulder the heavy burden of such responsibilities, and thus join the clergy of both dioceses in fraternal fellowship and mutual assistance.

Fifth, (and most important!), this event is an encouraging example for all well-meaning members of the once united ROCA and a living reproach to Her unfortunate voluntary or involuntary destroyers.

The fact that this inter-Communion will be truly fraternal, was illustrated by the Liturgy on May 14. The small altar area of the Church of St. Sergius could barely contain such a large number of clergy (and in addition to the two bishops, seven priests, an arch-hierodeacon, three subdeacons and several altar boys prayed together!), And despite such close quarters no one interfered with anyone, all the clergy gave way to each other to help make the Divine service as spiritually rich as possible -- is this not a manifestation of "love for one another" by which all may know Whose disciples are we?

The church was filled to capacity. From many parts of America and Canada, our good parishioners came together, all who could, who care about the destiny of our ROCOR, who are tired of endless hostility and splits, who seriously believe that the church's task is not to separate, but, on the contrary, to bind people, parishes and dioceses together in the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which is His Holy Church.

Since the distant year 2000, almost 17 years (!) now, under the onslaught of hostile forces and – alas! – under the influence of our own passions, the dismemberment of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad took place. Some members of the ROCA understood the words of St. John of Shanghai: "Our Church will be small, but pure as a crystal," mistakenly. They say, it is necessary for Her to be small, and even to expel those who, by their impurity, prevent Her from being as pure as "I understand her to be"! They forgot the words of Christ: "The healthy do not require a doctor, but the ailing!" They forgot that the Church is not a "congregation of the pure (and perfect)," but a spiritual hospital

created by the Lord Himself for the salvation unto Eternal Life, unto the Kingdom of Heaven of those who perish! They forgot that the Church is strong in its preaching amidst the surrounding godless world. She should not be reduced, but, on the contrary, should be enlarged, worshipping God “in Spirit and Truth” (John 4:24 – Christ’s words to the Samaritan Woman)!

Now it is possible to testify before the whole world: the intentions of Vladykas Andronik and Stefan are pure, they first overcame their own infirmities, and changed ambition and emotion “into dust of the road,” for sake of the holy cause of the restoration and growth of the Church Abroad, which many have talked about, but no one up to this time has made a single step towards!

It remains for us to thank the Wise Helmsman of the Church the Lord Jesus Christ, Who created the Church and guides Her in His Way!

Reverend Victor Zavodov