

An Open Letter to the Holy Abbots and the  
Holy Representatives of the Sacred Twenty  
Monasteries in the Holy Community of the Holy  
Mount Athos

Holy Abbots and Holy Fathers,

Bless!

We desire with this present letter to express our deepest concern and sadness for all that is happening to our Holy Orthodoxy for years now: things destructive to the teaching of the Holy Apostles and of the Holy Fathers and contrary to all the Sacred Canons enacted by the Oecumenical and local synods. We wonder if some Oecumenical synod has been assembled and has abolished the Canons which forbid joint prayer with heretics,<sup>1</sup> or if the Pope has repented and renounced the heresies of the *Filioque*, of primacy, of infallibility, of unleavened bread, of the purifying fire [purgatory—*trans.*], of created grace, of the immaculate conception of the Most Holy Theotokos, and many others, most of which have been condemned and anathematized repeatedly by Orthodox synods and by the entirety of the Holy Fathers.<sup>2</sup>

Heaven was angered and the Holy Fathers exceedingly saddened by seeing and hearing all that took place at the Phanar at the feast of the Holy Apostle Andrew on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November of the current year—unprecedented and unheard of things in the two thousand year history of the Church: “The dogmas of the Fathers are held in contempt, the Apostolic traditions are disdained, the churches are subject to the novelties of innovators,”<sup>3</sup> as St. Basil the Great says, regarding the events of his own times.

Everything happened literally upside-down. Instead of the heretical Pope being placed below, as we see the heretics depicted in the icons of the Holy Synods, and being dismissed from the Divine Liturgy, on the basis of the liturgical command, “the doors, the doors, in wisdom let us attend,” we elevated him to a high throne, where he sat wearing an *omophorion*; the Orthodox deacons censured him; the Patriarch exchanged the kiss [of peace] with him at “let us love one another;” as the *proestos* [the one presiding—*trans.*] he proclaimed the “Our Father;” the choir of sacred cantors chanted

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<sup>1</sup> See, as examples, Canon XLV (45) of the Holy Apostles: “Let any Bishop, of Presbyter, or Deacon that merely joins in prayer with heretics be suspended, but if he has permitted them to perform any service as Clergymen, let him be deposed [from office].” And, Canon VI (6) of the Synod of Laodicea: “Concerning the necessity of not permitting heretics to come into the house of God, so long as they persist in their heresy.”

<sup>2</sup> See, among many others: Saint Meletios of Galisiotou, Third Oration, Against the Latins, in V. Laurent-L. Darryzes, Dossier Grex de l' Union de Lyon (1272-1277) Paris 1976, page 554:

“The Latins have erred greatly and many times  
the whole choir of Fathers do condemn them,  
he who communes with the Latins is grouped  
as heretics and separated from Christ and the Saints.”

Saint Mark of Ephesus, Encyclical Letter, in I. Karamiri, The Dogmatic and Symbolic Books [In Greek], Vol. 1, pg. 425: “We have turned away from them as from heretics and for this reason we have separated from them. For what else? The rules of piety are clear: he who even in the slightest deviates from right faith is a heretic and subject to the laws set against heretics ... Thus, they are heretics and as heretics we cut them off.”

The Synod in Constantinople of 1848: “The Lord has seen fit to allow for heresies to spread to the greater part of the inhabited world, as with Arianism at one time, so, too, today with Papism.”

<sup>3</sup> Letter 90, *To the Most Holy Brethren and Bishops found in the West*, 2, PG 32, 473 [In Greek].

“Many Years” to him, as well as a specially composed troparion from an Athonite hymnographer – Lord, have mercy! – if, of course, the news reports are true; he was [also] permitted to give the congregation his blessing [εὐλογία], or, rather, his folly [αλογία] according to the Sacred Canons.<sup>4</sup>

We allowed the Church militant on earth to be divided from the Church triumphant of the Saints in heaven, and to be united with churches and assemblies of the cunning heretics. We insulted all of the holy Martyrs and Confessors who struggled to the point of blood against the heresies, because we presented their struggles, their martyrdoms and their confessions as to no avail and unnecessary. Will not the blessed Hagiorite Fathers martyred under [Oecumenical Patriarch John] Vekkou, who refused to accept and to commemorate the Pope, lament, seeing that not only do we reject their example by our silence, but to actually do the opposite? Why then did these and all of the previous Martyrs undergo martyrdom, and why did the Confessors stand fast in their profession of the Faith?

You know, Reverend Fathers, better than we do, the anti-Orthodox and blasphemous actions, declarations, and decisions of the Oecumenical Patriarch, and of the other Primates and Bishops who vociferously and visibly advocate – bare headed<sup>5</sup> – the acceptance and teaching of the chief heresy of Ecumenism, the greatest ecclesiological heresy of all the ages. This heretical teaching disavows the uniqueness of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church and equates it with the heresies, by accepting their sacraments as having and imparting sanctifying and saving grace. Besides recognition of the baptism of the followers of the Pope and of the Lutherans, we also have participation in the chalice with Monophysites, and in many cases with Papists in the Cyclades and in the Diaspora.

We take stock with much greater sadness that over the last few years the spiritual leadership of the Holy Mountain has not confronted these manifestations of apostasy with fortitude and the courage of confession, as did earlier Athonite Fathers. The Patriarch has gauged our responses, and because they are half-hearted, and many times non-existent, he proceeds without hindrance toward union with an unrepentant Pope, who remains enmeshed in heresies. He evaluated us and rejoiced greatly during his last visit to the Holy Mountain, as well, such that one would say that he came in order to take the consent and blessing of the Athonites for all that he had planned to do with the Pope a few days later.

We, lowly hieromonks and monks, confess to you that we have been scandalized by the silence and inaction of our spiritual leaders on Mount Athos, and together with us, the entire assembly of monastic-loving Orthodox Christians, both in Greece and throughout the world. They are all waiting to hear the voice of Mount Athos.

From you, the wiser and more erudite, we learned that when the Faith is endangered we are all held accountable if we are silent and shrink back, as St. Theodore the Studite says.<sup>6</sup> A monk, in particular, must not allow the slightest innovation in matters of the Faith, according to the [aforementioned] Holy Father and great monastic leader, organizer of monastic life, and the Elder of us all.<sup>7</sup> He did not fear the threats and the persecutions of the iconoclast emperors and patriarchs,

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<sup>4</sup> Canon XXXII (32) of Synod of Laodicea: “That one must not accept blessings of heretics, which are rather folly [also could be translated as ‘to one’s ruin’] rather than blessings.”

<sup>5</sup> See Canon 15 of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> Synod in Constantinople (861).

<sup>6</sup> Letter 71, to Pantoleon Logotheti, PG 99, 1321: “The Commandment of the Lord is not to remain silent in times when the faith is in danger. ‘Speak, he said, and do not remain silent.’” And, “*if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him*” (Heb. 10:38). And, “*if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out*” (Lk. 19:40). Thus, when it is a matter of faith, one should not say: ‘Who am I, a priest or a leader of the people?’ In no case should one remain silent.”

<sup>7</sup> Letter 79, to Abbot Theophilus, PG 99, 1049. “If there are any monks in our day, they will be proved by their works. The work of a monk is to not tolerate any innovations whatsoever as pertains to the Gospel, that they not

but within Constantinople, within the enclosure of the Great Sacred Monastery of Stoudion, he organized a procession with a thousand torch-bearing monks, who held the forbidden Holy Icons in their hands.

Saints Sabbas the Sanctified and Theodosios the Cenobite, likewise great monastic leaders, assembled ten thousand monks of Palestine long before in Jerusalem, and saved Orthodoxy from the heresy of Monothelitism.

Who will now save the Church from the most terrible heresy of Ecumenism and the deceit of Papism? The letters of protest, which the Holy Community [of Mount Athos] has sent at various times to the Oecumenical Patriarch, have not had any effect. It is no longer time for words, but for actions. We do not want to teach you, we the unlearned and wretched sinners, neither do we want to have ourselves appear as Confessors. Rather, we want to set at ease our monastic and Orthodox conscience; we want to honor and follow the conduct of the Holy Martyrs and Confessors, particularly those martyred under Vekkou. We do not want to shrink back, nor to place the monasteries and our brotherhoods above the purity of the Faith, above God and the Truth.<sup>8</sup>

We believe that after so many written and oral protests and objections, back-peddling [*i.e.*, going back on one's word—*trans.*], retreats and compromises, the only thing that will gladden the Orthodox and shame the *kakodox* is to cease commemoration of the patriarch and of all the bishops agreeing with him or remaining in silence.

Gather together, Holy Fathers, the monks of the coenobium, the sketes and the *kellia* into an all-monastic, fighting assembly—either within or outside of the Holy Mountain—and topple the towers of heresy, of Papism and of Ecumenism. Take up the good fight of the Faith. If you fail to act, we will prefer to do that which is God-pleasing, not man-appeasing.

May God enlighten all of us; may the Most Holy Theotokos shelter and bless her Garden; and may They protect the Orthodox Church from defamers of the Theotokos, and from heretics who fight against the Saints, as well as from fainthearted pastors who leave the flock unprotected from attacks of the wolves.<sup>9</sup>

Asking your prayers for all the foregoing, we, the undersigned, remain respectfully yours,

Hieromonk Ephraim, former abbot [of Philotheou], Elder of the Skete of Apostle Andrew [“Serrai”, of the Holy Monastery of Vatopedi] and the brotherhood with me.

Elder Eustratios, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra.

Elder Poimen, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of Zographou

Elder Basileios, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of Zographou

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become examples to laymen as proposing heresy and communion with heretics, for they will give account for their [the laity's] loss [of salvation].”

<sup>8</sup> Theodore Studite, *To Monastics*, PG 99, 1120. “Do we prefer the monasteries more than God and happiness here more than hardship for the sake of the good? Where is, ‘I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed’? Where is, ‘Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest’? Where are the glory and the power of our monastic order? Do you recall how the Blessed Sabbas and Theodosios, when Anastasios the impious emperor decided to turn against the Orthodox, rose up fervently fighting for the faith, on the one hand anathematizing the *kakodox* in the Church, on the other hand, with the letters they wrote saying to the king that they prefer death rather than to change that which they had received?”

<sup>9</sup> Jn. 10: 11-12: “*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.*”

Elder Bessarion, Hieromonk, Holy Monastery of Zographou

Monk Nikodemos (Bilalis), Sacred Cell "of the Presentation" from Kapsala

Monk Artemios, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Priestmonk Hilarion, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Paisios, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Savvas, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Hierodeacon Chariton, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Chariton, Karoulia, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Athanasios, Karoulia, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Vlasios, Monk, Kserokalyvo Viglas, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Akakios, Sacred *Kathisma* of the Holy Trinity (Kyr Isaiah) Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Isaiah, Monk, Kellion of the Birth of the Mother of God, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Cherubim, Sacred place of the Archangels, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Hieromonk Damaskinos, Kellion of Holy Trinity at Karyes, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Nektarios, Monk, Kellion of Holy Trinity at Karyes, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Theoklitos, Monk and the fathers with him; Kellion of the Sacred Forerunner, St. Anne's Skete, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Hieromonk Gabriel, Sacred Kellion of St. George (Kartsounaion) Sacred Skete of St. Anne, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Hieromonk Chrysostomos Kartsonas, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Kosmas Monk, Sacred Hut of St. Demetrios, Skete of Saint Anne, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Panteleimon, Monk, Sacred Kellion of St. Panteleimon, Sacred Skete of Holy Trinity, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Sophronios, Monk, Sacred Hut of Entrance of the Theotokos, Sacred Skete of Holy Trinity, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Parthenios, Sacred Hut Entrance of Theotokos, Sacred Skete of Holy Trinity, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Monk Athanasios at Vouleutiria, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Serapheim, Hieromonk, Kellion of All Saints, Skete of Saint Anne, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Daniel, Monk, Saint Anne's, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Gerasimos, Monk Sacred Hut of St. George, Katounakia, Holy Monastery of the Great Lavra

Elder Benediktos, Hieromonk, Kellion of Ss Konstantine and Eleni, Holy Monastery of Vatopedi

Monk Paisios, Kellion of Archangels (Savvaion) Karyes, Holy Monastery of Hilandar

Monk Silouanos, Sacred Hut of St. Nicholas, Nea Skete, Holy Monastery of St. Paul

Monk Gabriel, Kellion of Koutloumoussiou of Saint Christodoulos

Monk Dositheos, Koutloumoussiou Monastery *Kathisma*

Elder Nektarios, Monk, Sacred Hut of Holy Trinity, Skete of the Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Monk Paisios, Kellion of Saint Barbara, Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Elder Moses, Monk, Kellion St. John Chrysostomos, Skete of St. Panteleimonos, Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Elder Abraaham, Hieromonk, Sacred Hut of St Gerasimos Kefalinias, Skete of St. Panteleimonos, Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Elder Spyridon, Monk, Kellion of St. Nicholas, Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Monk Theodoulos, formerly of the Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Elder Chrysostom, Hieromonk, Kellion of St. Spyridon of Kerkyra, Holy Monastery of Koutloumoussiou

Monk Hilarion, Sacred Kathisma of the Holy Monastery of Doheiarou (Platon area)

Elder Nikodemos, Monk, Kellion of St. Nektarios Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros

Hieromonk Gabriel, Kellion of Quick to Hear Mother of GOD, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros

Monk Isaac, Kellion of Birth of Mother of GOD, Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros

Elder Athanasios, Monk, Kellion of St . Athanasios, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros

Elder Meletios, Monk, Birth of Theotokos, Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros

Elder Gregory, Monk Kellion of St. Nicholas, Kapsala, Holy Monastery of Pantokratoros

Elder Onoufrios, Monk, Kellion Dormition of Theotokos, Karyes

Elder Nicholas, Monk, Kellion of St. Demetrios, Karyes

Hieromonk Gabriel, Kellion of Holy Archangels (Kombologas) Karyes

*The collection of names continues.*