



Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle

Holy Synod in Resistance



The Orthodox Ecclesiastical Mind-Set¹

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Your Grace, Reverend Fathers and Mothers,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Χριστός Ἀνέστη! Christ is Risen!

When we speak of the Orthodox ecclesiastical mind or mind-set (φρόνημα), we do not simply mean thereby the acquisition and grasp, by each one of us, of the principles of the Faith and Life of the Orthodox Church theoretically, cognitively, and ideologically. Rather, we mean something deeper: a consistent attitude and perspective towards life that is imbued with the ethos of the Church. And the bearer of this ethos expresses and manifests it in every detail of his life.

Since, by Divine Grace, we are Orthodox and belong to the Holy Orthodox Church, we constitute the “members”² of the Body of Christ and “branches”³ of the Life-Giving Divine Vine. We have been given new birth in very same Baptismal Font, have received the same Seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit, and commune of the very same Holy and Spotless Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. The same Holy Gospel nourishes our hearing and vivifies our souls; the same sacred virtues permeate us, the same lofty ideals beckon us, and we tread upward on the same path towards Heaven.

¹ A Presentation to the first regular Clergy-Laity Conference of the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Phyle, at the Holy Convent of St. Paraskeve, on Thursday, April 27, 2012 (Old Style).

² I Corinthians 12:27.

³ St. John 15:5.

Our way is a common one, though each one of us must walk upon it and experience it in a personal way, in accordance with one's particular gifts and calling, whether in the parish or in a monastic community, under the guidance of his or her spiritual Father. Indeed, all of this occurs within the confines of the Mysteriological and Ecclesiastical structure of our Holy Metropolis in the Holy Synod in Resistance, which stands firm against the heresy of ecumenism. This structure is made secure and functions unimpeded by virtue of the vigilant solicitude and attentive care of its Archpastors. For this reason, as St. Ignatius the God-Bearer so concisely says, a group without Bishops and Priests "cannot be called a Church."⁴

It goes without saying that we, by God's mercy the Shepherds of the Church, are called first to uphold the Orthodox Faith and the Orthodox ethos, both in word and in deed, so as to constitute healthy and shining examples.

Within the Holy Church, we all hold forth as a "holy Family," as we have noted, the family of the children of God, who rest in the Divine Embrace of the Father.

And what should be achieved in each of us—Clergyman, Monk, and Lay Person—is that we be harmonious in our experience of the life of redemption in Christ with the ecclesiastical reality of our communion with one another in the Holy Spirit, that we might truly be distinguished by our true ecclesiastical mind-set. This is what we pursue in life, and it is accomplished with toil and struggle, for the effort to acquire and to make firm an ecclesiastical mind-set is a constant struggle for love, obedience, and unity.

Within the holy Family of the Church, our first and foremost trait should be love. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."⁵ And we will have love when we are of the same mind in faith and virtue, according to our Lord: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."⁶ And we shall ensure love and oneness of mind, and hence unity among us, when we have "the mind of Christ"⁷ and have faith in and obey our Godly shepherds, to the end that we might overcome our egotism, cleanse our passions, and be churchified. And what does "churchification" mean? The life of Grace, blessedness, and sanctification; life freed from the delusions of one's own self and characterized by a transformation of the individual "I" into the ecclesiastical "we"!

⁴ "Letter to the Trallians," *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 677B.

⁵ St. John 13:35.

⁶ Philippians 2:5.

⁷ I Corinthians 2:16.

St. Basil the Great beautifully summarizes these things when he pithily writes: “For one to cut himself off from interdependence with the brethren is not the mark of one who is walking by love, nor of one who is fulfilling the commandment of Christ.”⁸

For, unfortunately, even within the holy aura of the Church, we may embrace “earthly things,”⁹ allow “the mind of the flesh”¹⁰ to prevail within us, and remain prisoners of our ego, thus being unable to undergo the virtuous transformation of the ecclesiastical life of Grace and fated to provoke problems, divisions, scandals, and turmoil.

Precisely what is happening within us and around us in our surroundings may be ascertained easily: Does love for God and for our neighbor predominate? Do we have sincere reverence for, and do sincere obedience to, our spiritual Father? Are we ready to sacrifice our own interests for the common good and the greater benefit of the Church? Do we show martyr-ic perseverance, with love and hope, in the face of woes and unanticipated difficulties?

If our reply in all, or even one, of these instances is negative, then let us not deceive ourselves by saying that we are walking in a God-pleasing manner and that we have an Orthodox ecclesiastical mind-set. If, indeed, we are ready in all circumstances to put forward our own will—considering it better and more perfect—and to quarrel with our brothers, or even with our Shepherds, then let us be aware of the fact that we are dreadfully ill, working in an anti-ecclesiastical and catastrophic manner, and are in urgent need of great and profound repentance.

It is certainly not required or expected of us to agree on every single action or matter of a practical nature in daily life or even in ecclesiastical matters; but this does not mean that one should assail the sacred bond of faith and love between us.

Again, in this circumstance, let us call to mind the elegantly simple observation of St. Basil the Great: “Nothing, thus, is so distinctly Christian as to be a peacemaker.”¹¹

It is for this reason, moreover, that the virtuous and splendid fruits of a spiritual mind-set are “life and peace.”¹² He who is inspired by the Holy Spirit continually turns to God, beseeches His mercy, observes the Divine Commandments, undertakes good works, repents sincerely, respects and

⁸ “Epistle 65, To Atarbios,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXII, col. 421C.

⁹ Philippians 3:19.

¹⁰ Romans 8:6.

¹¹ “Epistle 114, To Kyriakos at Tarsus,” *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXII, col. 528B.

¹² See note 10.

honors his spiritual Father and his Bishop, is eager to retreat from his own desire when he sees—or when others assure him—that the general good of the Church requires that he do so.

Dear Fathers and Brothers and Sisters;

It is time to cultivate and intensify in ourselves the true ecclesiastical spirit, which so many have forgotten. If we truly wish to see a regeneration in our spiritual life, a renewal—indeed, of the necessities of life—in the place in which we dwell and fulfill our duties and our ministry, and an intensification of our Godly witness, it is imperative that we wage war against any divergence from the true ecclesiastical spirit!

Let us see several of the things that we can do:

- Put a stop to independent, egomaniacal activity, even where it is found detached from the domain of the Church, since it introduces a morbid ecclesiastical mind-set.

- At all costs, avoid factionalism, as well as the acceptance of alien influences by a secular way of thinking; the creation of rivalries, tension, and hostility and enmity; condemnation, accusations against the clergy; and constant complaints, and whispering and murmuring about others, for all these are part of a spurious ecclesiastical mind-set.

- Let there be maturity and discretion with regard to both essential and non-essential matters of ecclesiastical practice and life, and not uncritical adherence to formulas and rules supposedly passed down from the Fathers that have no substance or meaning, but are simply and solely a matter of stubborn insistence on something fixed and erroneous, eroding the progress of the Body of the Church, since this entails a degraded ecclesiastical mind-set.

- Bring to a halt the obvious deficits, in some believers, of a spirit of spiritual discipleship and obedience, such as inactivity and excuse-making in the name of secular duties; the secularization of Church life, and especially, indeed, the Divine Mysteries, with a corresponding fall to errors and arbitrariness, since all of these things clearly constitute the lack of a genuine and authentic ecclesiastical mind-set.

Matters are serious. These points, wholly indicative of this fact, are not theoretical or of little significance. They are enumerated with pain in one's soul, yet with a sense of responsibility to recognize and to correct whatever improprieties occur, whether systematically or occasionally.

The Sacred Legacy of us Old Calendarists in resistance, which we inherited from our enlightened and perspicacious Shepherd, is a legacy of balanced moderation and God-pleasing discretion: steadfast commitment

to the whole Truth of the Faith and to the Catholicity of the Church, but also to the whole of the Orthodox ethos: that handed down by Christ, that handed down by the Apostles, and that handed down to us by the Fathers.

Let us preserve all of these things in humility, and let us cultivate them with respect for, and obedience to, our Godly Shepherds and with harmonious accord and love for our brothers. Only then shall we have the sure hope of imparting such to those coming after us, that our ministry might gain a favorable judgment and defense before God.

