



HELLIGE NIKOLAI MENIGHETS BLAD

FROM THE STATUTES/
USTAV OF THE
ST. NICHOLAS PARISH
IN NORWAY:

§1: It «encompasses all
places in the country where
there live members».

§2: It will follow «all laws
and regulations that are gi-
ven by the government about
the religious communities
outside the state church».

Norway is strict about
the law of religious freedom
and the defence
of personal information.

It is not possible to move
persons from one religious
parish to another without
individual accept.



EKS
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N_o
2018

ENGLISH EDITION

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THE PROBLEM OR CONFLICT BETWEEN ARCHBISHOP JEAN AND ARCHIMANDRIT JOHANNES/ST. NICHOLAS PARISH IN OSLO.

The problem started when the Lutheran Dean of the Armed Forces in Norway contacted fr. Johannes. It was about an orthodox army-priest in Norway. Fr. Johannes had meetings with the Dean of the Armed Forces, Hagsæter, and they set up a very good proposal for the new priest fr. Theodor (Tor Vegard) Svane. He was on his way back from USA after studies in theology at St. Vladimirs and on our recommendation having been ordained a priest with the agreement that he should be 2. priest in St. Nicholas Parish and take care of our members in the Bergen-area.

Also archbishop JEAN agreed totally to that (se doc.1-2), Then there was a meeting between fr. Theodore and vладыko JEAN in Bussy, that resulted in an other agreement between them, that was reported by vладыko JEAN himself in a letter (doc.3). The parish council of St. Nicholas protested and explained why that was both against our agreement and against Norwegian law (doc.4), Archbishop JEAN called fr. Johannes to Paris for a meeting. Fr. Johannes went together with fr. Poul Sebbelov from Copenhagen as translator. The meeting was good, and the original agreement was almost renewed (doc. 5). Then came a second letter from vладыko JEAN confirming that he allowed fr. Johannes to continue his monthly liturgy on Saturday in Bergen. (doc 6). So came the decree: forbidding the monthly liturgy! (doc.8) However, because vладыko JEAN in his previous letter had allowed one monthly liturgy, fr. Johannes had already booked his flights and did not think that he broke any decree of the archbishop when travelling there 3. of february. Our faithful members in Bergen were expecting him and he did not want to disappoint them. However, this resulted in the letter of suspension (doc 12). Accusing him of three points: A)The forbidden liturgy in Bergen 3. of february. (But vладыko JEAN had given his written permission to it!) B) That he had not prayed for the archbishop during that liturgy. But this is not correct, in fact he prayed also for the archbishop. C) That he is not willing to concelebrate with fr. Olav and fr. Theodor. A handful of people including fr. Olav and, as it seems to us, fr. Theodor (probably because of disinformation) have behaved in a hostile way towards fr. Johannes and our parish. In keeping with what archbishop Gabriel had written us, we felt in our right not to invite them to our services. (As a matter of fact, before any problems started, we expected fr. Theodor to contact us after he returned from US, but he never did.). Those three accusations seems to us as excuses for punishing, and not as accusations of real serious sins against canonical order.

fortsetter neste side ►

doc. 1

Le 22 mai 2017 à 11:16,
Fader Johannes <fader.johannes@ortodoks.org> a écrit :

Christ is risen!

Dear Vladyko: Bless!

I have had contact with the dean for the armed forces in Norway.

We have come to a proposed deal about fr. Theodor Svane who is soon returning from USA to Norway.

I have earlier sendt You a mail with a question about his canonical place in relation to our parish.

On the condition that You will bless it:

He (fr. Theodor Svane) will be offered a place as military chaplain in Bergen with VERY good payment. (That will make it possible for him also to take responsibility for some of the work in our community there.)

This proposed contract is on condition that he is 2. priest in our parish (St. Nicholas), and that he is under me as the legal/juridical responsible, and that this is authorized by You, Vladyko.

*In Christ
fr. Johannes*

doc. 2

Fra: Renneteau <jeanrenneteau@gmail.com>

Sendt: 24. mai 2017 07:22

Til: Fader Johannes

Emne: Re: fr. Theodor Svane

Cher Père, Dear Father Johannes,

I agree with the solution You proposed in order to allow father Theodor Swann come to Norway. I hope You will be able to guide him in this new experience in Bergen. Thank You for Your help.

*May God save You. With all my best wishes. Christ is Risen.
+ Archbishop Jean.*

► *fortsetter fra side 2:*

The suspension came as a chock to us. It came without any real warning and without trying to communicate with us about the situation. Whatever was intended by the suspension it has been damaging for our parish and the faithful feel that it is they who are punished.

As we understand it: all of this conflict is a result of a series of misunderstandings due to at least two things: a) the confusing way communication between Paris and us that has taken place (cf. the incident in Bergen); b) disinformation from the small group of opponents to St. Nicholas Parish in Oslo. The whole situation is totally out of proportions and the crisis could have been avoided by taking into consideration the information from us and not only listening to them who want to hurt us.

The Council of The Orthodox Church in Norway.

doc. 3



ARCHEVECHE des EGLISES ORTHODOXES RUSSES
EN EUROPE OCCIDENTALE

АРХИЕПИСКОПИЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНЫХ РУССКИХ
ЦЕРКВЕЙ В ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ

EXARCHAT DU PATRIARCAT ŒCUMENIQUE

ЭКЗАРХАТ ВСЕЛЕНСКОГО ПАТРИАРХАТА

L'Archevêque

N° de protocole : 17.052

Paris, le 17 août 2017

Cher Père Johannes,

J'espère que vous allez bien et je vous souhaite une sainte fête de la Transfiguration du Seigneur.

Je voudrais partager avec vous le fruit de ma rencontre à Bussy lors de la fête de Saint Séraphin de Sarov avec le père Theodor Svane.

Nous avons évalué la situation nouvelle après son retour à Bergen. Sa situation matérielle paraît assurée car il va devenir aumônier de la Marine ce qui lui permet de vivre avec sa famille.

Cette stabilité nous permet d'envisager un travail pastoral à Bergen dont je le vois très capable et très désireux. Je sais que vous avez commencé une mission, une communauté à Bergen. J'ai donc confié au Père Theodor d'assurer la continuité de la vie de la communauté de l'Annonciation à Bergen. De plus cela vous soulagera car j'ai vu sur la carte la distance qu'il y a entre Oslo et Bergen.

J'espère que tout se passera bien et que cela contribuera au développement de l'Orthodoxie en Norvège dont où vous êtes un des pionniers.

En attendant l'occasion de vous rencontrer, je vous assure cher père Johannes de mon humble prière et vous bénis ainsi que votre communauté.



+ Jean de Charioupolis
+ JEAN, Archevêque de Charioupolis,
Exarque du Patriarche Œcuménique
des paroisses orthodoxes de tradition russe
en Europe Occidentale

doc. 4

Oslo, Norway 29. of august 2017

To His Eminence Archbishop JEAN of Chariopoulis

Paris – France

Dear Vladyko: Bless!

We – the parish council of The Orthodox Church in Norway – Saint Nicholas Parish - have met today to discuss Your letter (protocol number 17.052, 17. of august 2017) concerning Your decision in regard to fr. Theodor Svane.

In spite of the good will and intention we can see in the document, we find that it unfortunately rests on some misunderstandings.

We know that You have been informed by our parish priest about our proposed placement of fr. Theodor in Bergen, and we have, through our priest, negotiated an arrangement with the Royal Navy to secure employment for him there. You have also accepted this arrangement in email correspondence. Now, however, we feel that our agreement has been set aside. Fr. Theodor seems to have agreed on a similar arrangement with You, but without consulting us.. We have not been made aware of, or included, in any further discussions between the Royal Navy and fr. Theodor. In our previous discussions with the Royal Navy, which led to the original offer of employment, we were made to understand that this employment was conditional on his association with Saint Nicholas Parish.

Tor Vegard Svane (now fr. Theodor) converted in our community in Bergen, and after some time he started to express his desire to study Orthodox theology. We, through our rector, gave him all the recommendations and certifications he needed, and even some economical help to finance his studies. However, during his five years stay in the USA he did not maintain any real contact with us. After his ordination (also on our recommendation), he had no contact with us. He has never visited our church in Oslo or Bergen or any other place. He has never celebrated in any of our services. Few in our parish know him or have seen him. He has never contacted us to discuss his future either in Bergen or in Oslo. We have in effect no agreement with him, and eventually You and he seem to have annulled our generous proposal. Something has obviously been misunderstood here.

Our “mission” in Bergen is not an organized community. In fact, it is, in accordance with Norwegian legal regulations, an integral part of St. Nicholas parish. There is no legal possibility that this group, without asking each of its members separately, can be made into an independent community or parish. The financial basis of the Bergen group, its liturgical items etc. all belong to St. Nicholas. Our proposal was that fr. Theodor was to be on the staff of St. Nicholas Parish, as second priest in St. Nicholas church and then, on behalf of St. Nicholas, he could serve our members in Bergen. Without such an arrangement, we have unfortunately nothing to offer him. If he still wants to go to Bergen, he has to start from scratch, in effect competing with our mission there – exactly like fr. Olav Lerseth has done in Oslo. All of this is regrettably detrimental to the Orthodox Church in Norway. On basis of these additional facts we ask You to annul Your decision, and to make a new decision after further consultation with us, on the same terms as we previously proposed through our rector.

Asking for Your holy prayers and blessing.

Secretary of the Parish council, St. Nicholas Parish in Oslo
Dr. Philos. Torstein Theodor Tollefsen
Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oslo

The Annunciation mission in Bergen
Sturla S Olsen, starost
Stela Matthiesen, secretary

doc. 5

La réunion à Paris le 29 novembre 2017

Le mercredi 29 novembre, j'ai participé en tant qu'interprète à une réunion entre Mgr. Jean (Renneteau), Archevêque de l'Exarchat d'Europe Occidentale, et l'Archimandrite Johannes (Johansen), recteur de la paroisse de Saint-Nicolas en Norvège. Présent lors de la première partie de la réunion (avant le déjeuner) était également M. Nicolas Lopoukhine, secrétaire du Conseil Diocésain.

La réunion a eu lieu dans le bureau de Mgr. Jean à Rue Daru, Paris. L'occasion en était quelques problèmes en Norvège concernant les relations entre la paroisse de Saint-Nicolas et le père Théodor Svane et l'emplacement de ce dernier comme prêtre à Bergen. Le deuxième point principal de la réunion était les activités du père Olav Lerseth à Oslo.

Je me souviens des résultats de ladite réunion de cette façon: L'Archimandrite Johannes a présenté sa vision de la situation et a expliqué la législation norvégienne. Il a répondu à un certain nombre de questions de Mgr. Jean, qui sur cette base a exprimé vouloir prendre les décisions suivantes:

Mgr. Jean a annoncé qu'il avait l'intention d'accepter une demande du père Olav Lerseth d'une "lettre canonique" pour que ce dernier puisse être transféré au Métropolitain grec en Scandinavie, Met. Kleopas à Stockholm

Mgr. Jean a déclaré aussi que, après avoir entendu la présentation de l'Archimandrite Johannes de la situation, il était prêt à désigner le père Theodor Svane comme deuxième prêtre de la paroisse de Saint-Nicolas avec service quotidien à Bergen.

La réunion a duré de 12 à 16 heures interrompu par déjeuner. Aucun compte rendu écrit de la réunion n'a été fait immédiatement.

Archiprêtre Poul Sebbelov
Paroisse de la Protection de la Mère de Dieu
Danemark

As seen from the letter of vладыko JEAN (next side) he also confirms/accepts our 25-year old practice of celebrating liturgy once a month on Saturday in Bergen for our faithful members there.

doc. 6



ARCHEVECHE des EGLISES ORTHODOXES RUSSES
EN EUROPE OCCIDENTALE

АРХИЕПИСКОПИЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНЫХ РУССКИХ
ЦЕРКВЕЙ В ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ

EXARCHAT DU PATRIARCAT ECUMENIQUE

ЭКЗАРХАТ ВСЕЛЕНСКОГО ПАТРИАРХА

L'Archevêque

N° de protocole : 18.004

Paris, 11th January 2018

Dear Father Johannes,

I wish You a very happy New Year and hope that your Nativity feast went well. I am quite astonished by the different pictures You sent me. As I can see, You welcome different priests of various origin but do not welcome priests of our own archdiocese. Why such an attitude? During our last meeting in Paris on November the 29th, we clarified the situation in Bergen. Fr. Theodor must celebrate Liturgies two Sundays a month as we agreed, in order to assure the liturgical and pastoral life of our community in Bergen. As agreed, You can come one Saturday per month to celebrate liturgy in Slavonic. Furthermore, You agreed to assure full independence to Fr. Theodor for his spiritual ministry. I made the concession, for financial reasons, that our Bergen congregation will be financially dependent on St. Nicholas parish in Oslo, under the express condition of a financial equalization in favour of our Bergen congregation. I urge You to implement all these decisions which confirm my decree 71/17 of October the 10th 2017, nominating Fr. Theodor Svane head of our congregation in Bergen.

In addition I ask You, in order to respect the canonical order of the Church, to restore the name of the Annunciation community in Bergen and suppress the name of St. Sunniva, because for any change of the community's name you need the blessing and written agreement of Your archbishop.

If You refuse to concelebrate with Fr. Theodor and to obey to my above orders, I shall inform the Holy Synod. I hope we will not reach as far as this and that Your collaboration will help restoring peace among our faithful in Bergen and in Oslo.

I assure You of my prayers and send my archiepiscopal blessing.

+ John of Charioupolis

† **JOHN**, Archbishop of Charioupolis,
Patriarchal Exarch of Orthodox parishes
of Russian tradition in Western Europe

Archimandrite Johannes (Johansen)
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N 0661 Oslo
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doc. 7

VEDTAK

Menighetsrådet i ”Den ortodokse kirke i Norge – Hellige Nikolai Menighet” (organisasjonsnummer 971 278 315 / 998 305 055) har idag, 16. januar 2018, på sitt møte besluttet med majoriteten av stemmene (unntatt f. Johannes og f. Serafim som avsto) på basis av resolusjonene på Generalforsamlingen i 2015 og Den Ekstraordinære Generalforsamlingen samme år og Den Ekstraordinære Generalforsamlingen i 2017 med bekreftelse fra alle de underliggende kirkeforeningene til å bruke den fullmakt som der ble gitt til å

FORLATE foreningen av menigheter som kalles ”Erkestiftet for menigheter i Vest-Europa av russisk tradisjon /Eksarkat i det Økumeniske Patriarkatet med sentrum i Paris, Frankrike, ledet av erkebiskop Johannes av Charioupoulis. Denne utmeldingen omfatter hele menigheten: Hellige Nikolai menighet, Kristi Forklarelses menighet i Rogaland, kirkeforeningene i Bergen, Bodø, Neiden, Bygstad og klosteret i Hurdal.

RESOLUTION

The Parish-council of ”The Orthodox Church in Norway – St. Nicholas Parish” (organization number 971 278 315 / 998 305 055) has today 16. of January 2018 on its session decided with the majority of votes (except fr.archimandrite Johannes and fr.hierodeacon Serafim who abstained) on basis of the resolutions of the General Assembly of 2015, the Extraordinary General Assembly same year and the Extraordinary General Assembly of 2017 and the consent of the different communities to use the authorisation given there, to:

LEAVE the union of parishes called “ The archdiocese of parishes in Western Europe of Russian Tradition / Exarchate of the Oecumenical Patriarchate” with center in Paris, France, headed by archbishop John of Charioupoulis. This leave include all the parsih: St. Nicholas in Oslo, The Transfiguration in Rogaland, the communities in Bergen, Bodø, Neiden, Bygstad and the Skete in Hurdal.

Dr. Philos. Torstein Theodor Tollefsen
Secretary of the Parish-council
The Orthodox Church in Norway

doc. 8



ARCHEVECHE des EGLISES ORTHODOXES RUSSES
EN EUROPE OCCIDENTALE

АРХИЕПИСКОПИЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНЫХ РУССКИХ
ЦЕРКВЕЙ В ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ

EXARCHAT DU PATRIARCAT ŒCUMENIQUE

ЭКЗАРХАТ ВСЕЛЕНСКОГО ПАТРИАРХА

L'Archevêque

N° de protocole : 18.013

Paris, 17 January 2018

**Dear Reverend Father Archimandrite Johannes,
Dear Members of Saint Nicholas Parish Council,**

I hereby inform you of the decisions I have taken following different correspondences and decrees in relation with them:

- a) I have decided to create a parish in the city of Bergen dedicated to the Annunciation with Fr. Theodor Svane as rector (see decree enclosed).
- b) I decided to confirm the creation of the parish of Saint Hallvard in the city of Oslo, Fr. Olav Lerseth being appointed rector (see decree enclosed).
- c) In accordance with my responsibility as Archbishop and for the sake of the orthodox faithful of Norway, I relieve You of all pastoral duty in Bergen in order to avoid any interference with the structure I have set up in Bergen (see decree enclosed).
- d) The parish of Saint Hallvard in Oslo has the same status of legal and pastoral independence as the parish of the Annunciation in Bergen.

In the present situation, I forbid You to create new missions, communities or parishes, or to change the names of existing missions, communities or parishes without my blessing and prior written consent.

Our Diocese Administration has obtained the financial reports for the years 2012 to 2016 of your association under the name: Den ortodokse Kirke i Norge Hellige Nikolai menighet (971 278 315). We have noticed that since 2014 you have not paid the financial commitment to the Archdiocese. We remember you that in order to participate to the General Assembly of the Archdiocese, parishes must pay a duty according to the Status (art. 13). At the present time, the amount is 9% of your annual income. We kindly ask you to regularize your financial situation for the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017 as soon as possible.

Could you kindly confirm that all the real estate, which appear in the report, belong to the Parish Council or to the Parish of Saint Nicholas, as written in the report?

I have noticed that on the Archdiocese web site, apart those of the Annunciation and Saint Hallvard, there are seven (7) other parishes or missions of our Archdiocese in Norway. Could you kindly send us a copy of the archiepiscopal decrees related to them as well as their status?

I have noticed also that in 2017 you have declared that 928 persons declare being members of Saint Nicholas Parish and are liable to a financial support from the State of Norway. Could you kindly send us the list of these persons who are under the pastoral and spiritual responsibility of the Archdiocese?

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fortsetter neste side ►

I hope that these decisions will bring peace between You, your fellow priests, and the Archdiocese.

Very soon, I shall personally come to Oslo in order to concelebrate with the whole clergy and the faithful people of our Archdiocese in Norway.

May God bless you all! May I remember You, very dear Father, not to forget your monastic vows and the oath You took upon priestly ordination (to accomplish your ministry in accordance with the holy canons of the ecumenical and local councils and of the holy Fathers and always obey your archdiocesan bishop).

With love in Christ and prayer, your Archbishop,

+ John of Charioupolis

† **JOHN**, Archbishop of Charioupolis,
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doc. 9

What is wrong with the decisions made by archbishop John concerning Norway?

I write this as a private member of St Nicholas' Church in order to clarify what is wrong with the decisions made by the archbishop concerning us. I comment below on several points in the letter from the archbishop dated Paris 17 January 2018. The decisions are imprudent for several reasons: (a) they are a break with solutions already agreed on by the archbishop and us on at least two occasions, (b) they create unrest in our local church and exposes us to bad publicity in the newspapers, and (c) they suggest that we break Norwegian law.

- 1) It is announced that the archbishop has created a parish in Bergen. We wonder, is it not premature to create a parish before there are any faithful? Maybe he retorts that there are the members of St Nicholas' parish in Bergen and that they constitute the new parish. *I answer that this cannot be decided over the heads of the members.* Membership in religious communities in Norway is based of the free choice of each person. One may join and leave such communities freely. Nobody can order you or demand of you to join or leave. (We have informed the archbishop of this several times.) If one still tries to *enforce* a split in St Nicholas' parish it is definitely a morally suspect procedure and could maybe be considered illegal. Pressure, direct or indirect, could be seen as a violation of the freedom of conscience.
- 2) It is announced that the archbishop has created a new parish in Oslo. I find that imprudent given that fr. Olav Lerseth and his companions will compete with St Nicholas parish. Lerseth and some of his friends have again and again slandered father Johannes and acted in ways that harm the church in Norway. This is confirmed to me by former members of Lerseth's community in Moss (where he was allowed to make a congregation by archbishop Gabriel of blessed memory), after the breakdown of that group.
- 3) It is announced that father Johannes is relieved of all his pastoral duties in Bergen so that there shall be no interference with fr. Theodor Svane's new parish. This is *inconsistent* with the archbishop's creation of a new parish in Oslo, a parish that, according to our former experience, will

fortsetter neste side ▶

“proselytize” on the members of St Nicholas’ parish. This action is imprudent. However, given the fact that there are members of St Nicholas’ parish in Bergen that *by their own choice* want to continue as members, is it not unwise to deny them to be visited by their priest and having the Liturgy served? Is this a decision that is pastoral or made for the sake of the faithful? To me it rather seems like an abuse of power. *I really doubt that the archbishop has the right to deny a priest to serve the members of his own community. (And now father Johannes is imprudently punished because he has taken the need of his parishioners seriously. By punishing him the archbishop punishes the faithful.)*

- 4) Father Johannes (or our parish) is forbidden to create “new missions, communities or parishes, or to change the name of existing missions, communities or parishes” without the blessing and written consent of the Archbishop. All our former activities and all our establishments have been blessed by former archbishops, viz. those that were archbishops before archbishop Job. We have always been loyal to the Exarchate and the trouble we experience now is created solely by imprudent decisions made without even listening to us.
- 5) We are asked to regularize our financial situation with regard to the archdiocese for the years 2014-2017. These are the years that we did not pay our fee. However, we stopped paying that fee as a protest because archbishop Job ignored the decision made by his predecessor, the good archbishop Gabriel, that for the peace and order of the church in Oslo fr. Olav Lerseth’s activities should be restricted to Moss. (Cf. point 3 above.) Now, Lerseth’s activities in Moss broke down and now the present archbishop regularizes a situation of *competition* between parishes within his own jurisdiction. There is no reason to doubt it: they will try to build Lerseth’s parish “proselytizing” on St Nicholas, now with the blessing of the archbishop. This is very imprudent.
- 6) The archbishop asks, as if we were suspected of a crime, if there are archiepiscopal confirmations related to the so-called “parishes and missions” of the archdiocese in Norway. Under former, and wiser, archbishops there were no need of documents regarding all details. They

fortsetter neste side ▶

gave their blessing convinced that it was to the benefit of the church and the faithful. Now a spirit of *control and suspicion* has entered our relations. It is not to the advantage of the church and its members that this spirit of suspicion continues.

- 7) The archbishop asks us *to violate Norwegian law* by giving the Exarchate access to the list of members of St Nicholas' parish. We are strictly forbidden to do this. In Norway there are laws protecting privacy and laws securing that membership in religious groups is by free choice. (One should also remember that there are members of St Nicholas parish that come from countries with former communist regimes. It is not difficult to imagine what kind of impression such a demand might make on these.) The demand is imprudent and outrageous.
- 8) The worst issue is that the archbishop has broken agreements between him and our parish two times. It was agreed on two occasions that fr. Theodor Svane should be second priest in St Nicholas' parish with responsibility for our members in Bergen. Both these agreements were broken without consulting us. In an ordinary organization such a person would not have been considered qualified to be a leader.

The only solution I can see to these issues is that St Nicholas' parish with all its "missions" and the monastery seeks to be received into another canonical, Orthodox Church. Finally, we are informed in the letter that the archbishop soon will visit Norway and we have lately received an email confirming the date. I cannot see that there is anything to achieve if the archbishop comes to Oslo. It will only make things worse.

I find it unfair, imprudent, and harmful for the faithful that father Johannes is punished by the archbishop for serving these same faithful. I protest against this decision.

doc. 10

Dear father Angel

Thank you for your friendly letter – that is something we appreciate these days. Before I come to the issue I would just like to comment on the term ‘schismatic’. We have decided to leave the Exarchate, but we are still under Constantinople, until we are received into another canonical church, something we are working at. We are therefore not ‘schismatic’. When it comes to your visit to Oslo on Saturday we, unfortunately, are not going to open the church for the Liturgy. The same goes for the visit of the archbishop next weekend. This is a matter of principle. There is one practicality that makes it impossible for us to let you in this Saturday: father Johannes is on a journey somewhere (I don’t know where) and it is he who has the key. There is in addition the difficulty that no Liturgy is announced for the coming Saturday, so nobody will turn up anyway. You tell us in your email that you are temporarily nominated ‘rector’ of our parish, something we have not been formally informed of and that we therefore cannot accept. You must understand that the parish consists of faithful that appreciate their priest, father Johannes, and support him in these difficult days. The decisions we have passed come from the body of the faithful and we do not feel at all comfortable with enforced decisions from those that do not respect us. By suspending father Johannes we feel that the archbishop acts to harm all of us, the faithful, who stand by our beloved priest. Hypothetically, if a priest that is installed over the heads of the members of the parish comes to celebrate the Liturgy, there is no possibility to predict the reaction. It will be felt as if someone intrudes into our church, the church we feel as our home.

Once more we appreciate the friendly tone of your letter and we do not consider you an enemy. In happier days it would have been a pleasure to welcome you in St Nicholas’ Church.

On behalf of the parish council

Yours in Christ

Torstein Theodor Tollefsen

doc. 11

On the 16th of January 2018, the parish council of The Orthodox Church of Norway - St. Nicholas Parish, including all of her missions, as well as the monastery, unanimously passed a resolution to withdraw from the Patriarchal Exarchate for Orthodox Parishes of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe. We see, therefore, no reason to open our church for the Divine Liturgy on the 10th of February with Fr. Angel, nor for services on the 17th and 18th of February with Archbishop Jean.

On behalf of the parish council


Torstein Theodor Tollefsen

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doc. 12



ARCHEVECHE des EGLISES ORTHODOXES RUSSES
EN EUROPE OCCIDENTALE

EXARCHAT DU PATRIARCAT ŒCUMENIQUE

АРХИЕПИСКОПИЯ ПРАВОСЛАВНЫХ
РУССКИХ
ЦЕРКВЕЙ В ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ

ЭКЗАРХАТ ВСЕЛЕНСКОГО ПАТРИАРХА

DECREE N° 07-18

By this Decree, the Reverend Archimandrite JOHANNES (JOHANSEN), is released from his function a Rector of the parish of St. Nicholas in Oslo (Norway) and taking care about his behavior and in virtue of Apostolic Canons 31 and 39, Council of Laodicéa 57, Prime-Second Council 13, Council of Gangres 6, is suspended in his priestly functions, from that day.

It is forbidden for the Archimandrite JOHANNES (JOHANSEN), to celebrate the divine services, to confer the sacraments or the blessings to the faithful as well as to wear the liturgical vestments and the cross, until the judgment of the Disciplinary Committee of the Archbishop-Exarchate.

This for the following reasons:

- on February 3, 2018 he went to Bergen to celebrate a liturgy while Decree No. 3-18 of January 17, 2018, not allowed him any liturgical and pastoral action in Bergen, defying the authority of his Archbishop and the specific commission from Diocesan Council ;
- during this liturgy he did not commemorate the Name the Archbishop direct breaking in this the Tomos patriarchal Art. 5, point. 3 "the parish clergy commemorate, according to Russian tradition, the Ecumenical Patriarch and the Archbishop";
- his behavior with the other priests of our Exarchate is unworthy of him because he refuses them co celebration not even allowing them to enter the altar.

He is called during his suspension, to present himself immediately in front of his Archbishop and in front of the Disciplinary Committee of our Archbishop-Exarchate in accordance with the Exarchate statutes (Art. 88, point 5.).

In witness whereof this decree is delivered to them.

Paris, 05th February 2018



+ John of Charioupolis
+ JOHN Archbishop of Charioupolis,
Patriarchal Exarch of Orthodox parishes
of Russian tradition in Western Europe

Certified by the Secretary of the Council of the Archdiocese,
Nicolas LOPOUKHINE

doc. 13

Dear Vladyko Jean: Bless!

On this day, the day of forgiveness, I ask You humbly to forgive all my sins against You, in thoughts, and words, written or spoken. I see that I might have used harsh words and that I might have hurt Your feelings. I ask forgiveness for that.

We have different understandings about the church-situation in Norway, and I respect You and Your understanding and Your opinions about it, but as long as we continue the conflict, the church will suffer, our believers will suffer, and many people think that there is a split, a scisma between us, and they loose faith and confidence because of us. I therefore ask You humbly to take away the suspension You have given me, and let me exercise the priesthood in the normal way again (as I have done in nearly 40 years), so the church here will not suffer any more. I think You would win much by doing that. And then I will ask You to give me the «canonical leav» so that the parish again can live in a normal and healthy spiritual manner to benefit the believers og to honour God.

Now You have founded two new parishes in Norway, and that means that people can choose where they will belong. I will not work against them, in fact I have already given advice on how they who want it, can change their membership from our parish to one of the other two. I will not make any troubles for them. And I hope that You will also not make any troubles for our parish in its future life. I think the best for all is that we can go each our way as friends and not as adversaries.

In Christ
Your humble servant

Fr. Johannes

This letter of repentance from fr. Johannes did not get any respons from archbishop JEAN.

doc. 14

ARCHEVÊCHE DES EGLISES ORTHODOXES
DE TRADITION RUSSE EN EUROPE OCCIDENTALE
PATRIARCAT DE CONSTANTINOPLE

TRIBUNAL ECCLESIASTIQUE DIOCESAIN
Commission de Discipline

Le président
Archiprêtre Wladimir Yagello
Paris, le 3 mars 2018

Archimandrite Johannes Johansen

Cher Père,

Suite à votre attitude et à vos agissements dans nos paroisses de Norvège, notre Archevêque Jean de Charioupolis s'est rendu à Oslo du 19 au 22 février dernier pour vous rencontrer, en vue de trouver une solution satisfaisante à la situation actuelle, dont vous êtes responsable.

Malheureusement l'entrevue souhaitée n'a pas eu lieu, et vous n'avez pas répondu non plus à la convocation (Déc. 07-18 du 5 février 2018) de Monseigneur Jean, en vue d'une explication.

La Tribunal ecclésiastique a été saisi le 2 mars 2018, par Son Éminence l'Archevêque Jean de Charioupolis, en application de l'article 88, § 5 des statuts de l'Archevêché, pour traiter de votre statut canonique, en vertu de quoi nous vous convoquons au siège du Tribunal ecclésiastique 12 rue Daru 75008 Paris pour une audition devant les membres du Tribunal ecclésiastique.

Etant donnée la distance et afin que vous puissiez entreprendre sereinement ce voyage, nous vous accordons quelque jours de réflexion, cependant cette audience doit avoir lieu le plus rapidement possible, avant le mercredi 28 mars, car il est hautement souhaitable que cette affaire soit terminée avant la Grande Semaine de la Passion.

Vous pouvez répondre par mail à l'adresse de l'archevêché, ou si vous préférez par mail au président du Tribunal ecclésiastique: yagellowlad@free.fr

Bien fraternellement en Christ,

Archiprêtre Wladimir Yagello

doc. 15

From the Parish Council, Regarding the Regrettable Events of Recent Times.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The church's problems extend back to when Job was Archbishop (2013-2015). Archbishop Job removed Father Johannes as Dean for the Scandinavian deanery due to complaints, sent to the Exarchate in Paris, from three people: Stig Frøyshov, Father Olav and (then) Father Christophoros. Job also created many additional problems for the Exarchate, especially in France. This led to massive protests and he was then removed by the Synod in Constantinople. Already in the case of Father Johannes' removal as Dean shows how unprofessionally complaints are handled by the Exarchate. Father Johannes was not informed of the decision in any personal letter and was unable to make a statement on his own behalf, nor produce alternative witnesses in the matter. His removal as Dean was published on the Exarchate's website.

The current Archbishop, Jean (2016-), seems to carry on the same bad practice. First, he makes his decisions without consulting his advisors, and, secondly, he publishes some of the decisions on the Exarchate's website and not in the form of letters to those they may concern.

Since the beginning of 2018, Archbishop Jean has made three statements of importance to us. Below we list the most important points from these:

- 1) The document dated January 17th, in which he establishes churches in Bergen (with Father Theodor as a priest) and Oslo (with Father Olav as a priest). Father Johannes is told to discontinue his work in Bergen, and the Archbishop tells Father Johannes to submit a list of all of the members of the St. Nicholas parish.
- 2) The decree of February 5th, where he suspends Father Johannes from the function of priest in the St. Nicholas parish because Father Johannes celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the parish members in Bergen.
- 3) The letter of February 13th in which he asks the members of the St. Nicholas parish to go to Father Olav's and Father Theodor's parishes if they want to «remain within the normal canonical life» of the church.

We would like to respond to these statements. It appears that the Archbishop believes that he can divide the congregation of St. Nicholas parish and transfer the members to Father Theodor's new parish in Bergen. What we – i.e. the general assembly and parish council – have opposed is to «give away» members of our church to a priest who is outside of our congregation. We have said and claimed, with reference to the facts, that the people in, for example, Bergen (which forms the basis of our activity there) cannot be «given away» but are full members of the St. Nicholas parish. The only way for them to become members of another church is namely by withdrawing their membership from St. Nicholas parish and becoming members of another parish. This is a simple procedure and is in accordance with Norwegian law. Our statutes clearly state that the parish will comply with Norwegian law and the requirements made of religious communities. The archbishop's demands would require us to go against our statutes and break Norwegian law. We cannot agree to this.

The Archbishop's letter of 13 February refers to «their assertion [that is, the parish council's] that St. Nicholas parish should control all the congregations as a single congregation, subject to St. Nicholas». This is a strange wording. «The Orthodox Church in Norway – St. Nicholas Parish» was founded in 1931 as a nationwide church. It is stated

fortsetter neste side ▶

in our statutes, approved by the exarchate in Paris, and registered by the Norwegian authorities that the church encompasses «all parts of the country where members live». On this basis, the parish has initiated regular services, for example in Bergen. There we have had monthly liturgical activity for approximately 25 years with the approval of our archbishops who have even blessed starosts for several of these places. These are places and activities that are fully integrated into St. Nicholas parish, not independent or semi-independent communities.

According to the same letter, «we oppose all the appointments and creation of churches that are not directly dependent on them [that is, us]». It's completely wrong. For us, the archbishop can create as many parishes as he wants in Norway, we do not have anything to do with that. The problem is just that he thus creates the foundation for competition. The creation of a new parish in Bergen obviously aims at just taking over the established activity of St. Nicholas in the same place. Instead of appointing Father Theodor Svane as a priest within the context of our parish, as was originally agreed upon, so that he could continue our work for everyone's benefit, he now becomes a competitor who will probably proselytize members of our parish, as the Archbishop encourages in his letter of 13 February. A similar situation is created in Oslo by encouraging our members in Oslo to go to Father Olav's new parish.

If we examine Archbishop Jean's three statements as a whole, it becomes a bit confusing: On the one hand, he acknowledges that Saint Nicholas parish has withdrawn from the exarchate. On the other hand, he still tries to control us as if we belonged to the exarchate. He suspended Father Johannes because he served our members in Bergen, and he threatens Father Johannes and the parish council with further punishment if we do not submit and cooperate. This is inconsistent. That he (on the one hand) acknowledges that we do not belong to the exarchate may explain his call to go to the two newly established parishes. This request may seem as an attempt to scare or entice the members of St. Nicholas parish into the exarchate again while he still has a means to pressure us and before we are received by another bishop. If there really is such a strategy behind, we are faced with an undisguised attempt to split our parish.

In regard to his demands to submit a complete list of our members, all our members can be confident that they will not wake up one morning and find out that they are now members of a different, and new, church they have never heard of before! This demand is unheard of. According to the laws and regulations for religious communities, the priest of the congregation has access to the membership list, and all information about our members is confidential and protected by Norwegian privacy laws. We will never disclose information about our members to anyone and no one will be able to access this information. Be safe, everyone!

We are accused of not having opened the doors of our church for Father Angel Velitchkov from Stockholm, who was ordered by the Archbishop to celebrate the liturgy in our church. But the congregation has left the exarchate (something the Archbishop himself seems to accept), so the parish council had no reason to open the church to an outside priest whom it had not invited. We have nothing negative to say about Father Angel. This can almost be perceived as a provocation by the Archbishop.

As far as we understand, the Archbishop understands that the St. Nicholas parish has withdrawn from the exarchate. There is therefore no reason for the him to threaten us with anything. He has no authority over us anymore.

This whole sequence of events has been a period of testing for our parish. From now on we should look forward to the normalization of the conditions under the blessing of a new bishop. Work is being done on that behalf.

The Parish Council for
The Orthodox Church in Norway – St. Nicholas Parish

doc. 16

Oslo, February 19th, 2018
(Sunday of Last Judgment ¹)

To whom it may concern

The present text is written in connection with the latest developments regarding the Norwegian Orthodox Parish of St. Nicolas in Oslo and, precisely, the suspension from his service and priestly duties of its rector, the very Reverend Archimandrite fr. Johannes Johansen, ordered by the Archbishop of the Exarchate in Paris, His Eminence Jean of Harioupolis.

The aim of this text is neither to offend nor to defend persons and matters; rather, the following aims exclusively at the truth.

My name is Panagiotis Pavlos. I am chief cantor in the church of the Greek Orthodox Parish 'Annunciation of the Mother of God' in Oslo, where I voluntarily serve on a monthly basis since January 2013 and on a weekly basis since March 2015. In the past I have also served as Chairman of the Board of the Greek Orthodox Community in Norway, which amounts nearly 2.000 members. In my professional life I am a researcher at the Department of Philosophy, University of Oslo.

What follows below has a twofold dimension. First, it contains a mere exposition of certain facts I have eye witnessed since the beginning of 2013, when I first came to meet the parish of the Norwegian Orthodox Church of St. Nicolas in Oslo, the members of the parish and its archpriest, fr. Johannes Johansen.

Here is why. The Greek Orthodox Church in Oslo got a priest on a permanent basis only in March 2015, thanks to His Eminence, Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia. Until then, Divine Liturgy was performed only once a month. Therefore, I have been attending the Liturgy in the church of St. Nicolas in Oslo on a basis of 3 Sundays per month, for approximately 2 years. During this period, I have been voluntarily chanting the liturgical hymns in Greek Byzantine music in the parish of St. Nicolas, after the respective suggestion of fr. Johannes.

Secondly, this text contains certain thoughts that are both directly and indirectly connected with the suspension of fr. Johannes Johansen as a priest. These thoughts are spelled out in the clearest consciousness.

fortsetter neste side ►

¹ Although completed later the text was initially conceived on the Sunday of Last Judgement.

I. Facts

1. Fr. Johannes is the founder of the Orthodox monastery of St. Trifon Sketa at Hurdal, a peaceful, naturally isolated, site, north of Oslo, perfectly suitable to the necessary *hesychia* that monastic life demands and deserves. He lives in the monastery together with the monk and deacon fr. Seraphim. To anyone who has visited Mount Athos this monastery clearly reminds of the settlements of the Athonic monastic *Politeia*, with:

i. Its beautiful *Katholikon*, painted with frescos of definite Byzantine style, and decorated with a wooden iconostasis and original icons.

ii. Its fountain (*Phiale*) for the Holy Blessing of water, a result of collaboration and contributions of several friends of the monastery and of members of the parish of St. Nicolas in Oslo.

iii. Its Belfry tower (*Kodonostasion*) with a cluster of bells and their mechanism of manually ringing, precisely as it stands in all the monasteries of Mount Athos and elsewhere.

iv. A tower over the eastern entrance to the monastery, where a Chapel has been recently built in, painted with Byzantine frescos.

v. A wooden Chapel and *asceterion* celebrating St. Seraphim of Sarov, settled in the outer perimeter of the monastery.

vi. Its Guest House (*Archontarikion*), where all pilgrims have the opportunity to enjoy Orthodox monastic hospitality, in the heart of Norway. Worth noting, the Archontarikion not only hosts the congregation after the liturgy (*synaxis*), but also welcomes religious, cultural and of other spiritual interest arrangements and events, on a regular basis. There, one can find available the products of the Monastery, its book editions, embroideries, a variety of handcraft art materials, and several different types of pure, original candles. The latter is the principal handiwork (*ergocheiron*) of Hierodeacon, fr. Seraphim, and covers the needs of the parish of St. Nicolas, while it supplies the Greek Orthodox Church in Oslo, as well.

All this activity performed by its -few in number, but many in heart- monks gathers to the monastery many Orthodox faithful and non-Orthodox people interested in the treasures of the Orthodox Church. These people are offered an invaluable experience of the living tradition of the Orthodox Church; an experience (*βίωμα*) that grants Living Water and opens up to Eternity for all.

2. Fr. Johannes has been the rector of the church of the parish of St. Nicolas in Oslo for nearly 40 years. I have seen with my own eyes how efficient this person has been; not only as a proper liturgist of Christ, as a wise preacher who is genuinely concerned about, and embraces with unselfish love and tenderness, his flock, and as a leader who takes real leadership to be constantly serving the other. But also as a person charged with renovating, in fact rebuilding from scratch -and in a very short time- within nearly 2 years, the church of the parish of St. Nicolas in Oslo, which is now a real miracle, a beauty to the eyes and a consolation to the soul.

This church, both as a material and a spiritual ship, is a boast (how could it not be?) for any Bishop who is in charge of the area to which the parish belongs. Without doubt, any Bishop would be proud; he would admire the good works of his faithful priest and he would regularly benefit from co-celebrating with the faithful members of the parish, and thus receive the joy the 8th *Stair* (3rd *Antiphon*) of the 3rd tone of Sunday matins refers to: *'Rejoice, chief shepherd, beholding your children round your table bearing branches of virtue'*.

3. Fr. Johannes is serving the church of St. Nicolas in Oslo every Sunday. But, the day before, on Saturdays, he travels to Stavanger, to Bergen, to Kirkenes –places at significant distance from Oslo- and all around Norway, to serve –with the strength of a young priest- the Divine Liturgy for the faithful people. I do not recall any single weekend, throughout the last 5 years, that fr. Johannes has missed to efficiently respond to his duties. This can be easily evidenced from the online available (and archived) schedule of services.

Norway is not a small country: if one reverts it on the map, one will be surprised to see how the remotest to the north point of the country falls nearly upon Turin, in Italy. This is enough to show how many hundreds of miles this person travels monthly, along with his fellow monk, to reach the remotest faithful.

4. In addition to the above, here it comes a contribution of fr. Johannes, which is equally substantial in sealing the imprint of Orthodox faith and tradition in Norway. For he is the person who has been systematically translating into Norwegian not only all the liturgical texts of the Orthodox Church, but also a great amount of works of some among the most central ascetic figures, Church fathers and Saints of Orthodox Christianity.

If Egil Wyller, the over 90 years old, but youthful in the spirit, professor of Philosophy was the one who -several decades ago, and along with translating Plato to Norwegian- translated and introduced to Norway the wisdom of Eastern Church fathers, it is absolutely thanks to fr. Johannes Johansen that any Norwegian faithful or any other Scandinavian interested in, may have access to the unique treasure of hymnology, hymnography, prayer and the admirable texts of the Orthodox liturgical tradition. I personally have greatly benefited from regularly using his translation of the Liturgies of St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, and several other hymns, in the Greek Orthodox church in Oslo.

5. In my life I have met numerous monks, priests and Bishops, in Greece and all over the world. I have also met real monks, real priests and real Bishops, whom I do not wish to name, and who have boldly graven in me certain non-negotiable criteria that argue for the obvious: namely that fr. Johannes is a real monk, an unselfish priest and *leitourgos* of Christ, who is unceasingly offering, for nearly 40 years, his life to Christ and to the *pleroma* of the Orthodox Church in Norway. To my opinion, many Bishops in Greece, at least, would have dreamed to have such a priest in their Metropolis.

There are, certainly, many other facts that, if I were about to mention, I would be abandoned by time in my narrative...

II. Thoughts

1. What I personally experience from the controversy evolving around the parish of St. Nicolas in Oslo, is a bit of a paradox. Namely, that the priest who has been keeping alive and growing the Norwegian Orthodox congregation for several decades, is punished, suspended and nearly excommunicated. I wish to believe - in fact I do not dare to imagine the contrary - that none of the agitators of this controversy had ever aimed that far. Strikingly, all this happens through a recruitment of orders stemming from a Church leader who -not exclusively him personally, but his institution- has not paid a single visit to Norway for many years.

As an example of proper, smooth collaboration between a parish and the leadership of the local Church, one could consider the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Church of the Annunciation of the Mother of God in Oslo, which has seen its Metropolitan, Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia, visiting Oslo and the Greek

Orthodox flock in Norway nearly 15 times, during the last 4 years. Certainly, spatial expansion cannot be an excuse in this case, since the Metropolis of Sweden is large enough to consist of 5 countries: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Greenland.

2. Moreover, I think that any application of the Church Canons deserves and presupposes a sensitive heart, a wise intellect and a real ecclesiastical attitude that engages the whole and not unilaterally the part. If Christ behaved in the authoritative way that is often experienced in the Orthodox Church of our days, then there would be no need to celebrate any Sunday of Judgment. For, then, we should all have already been condemned to dust, where we come from.

3. We live in a world full of pain, sorrow and disasters; although we live in the most prosperous and richest country in the world, this reality cannot be clothed. We know well that human beings need, and deserve, much more than the exercise of authoritative power over them. They do deserve salvation. Salvation is offered by Him Who is beyond death. The power of Christ that overflows from the Tomb smashes all mundane strength, all mundane argumentation and dilemmas, all mundane strategies and agendas. Christ and He Resurrected is the precious vessel we have been offered. He is the Vessel that frees human being here, now and forever, releasing it from the bonds of all kinds of blind subordination.

It is because of the death humanity experiences and suffers, that, without anticipating Him Who is constantly restoring the Whole, we all are, as a matter of fact, a sectarian congregation of zombies. Consequently, anything else, or anything other than the living experience and anticipation of Him Who has -once and forever- corrupted our corruption and death with His unconceivable death and resurrection, is simply not worthy of attention for any human being, faithful or not.

It seems that in the parish of St. Nicolas in Oslo the 'stadium of virtues' has opened earlier than the Holy Lent, this year. Greater contest, brighter wreath.

Respectfully Yours,
Panagiotis G. Pavlos

doc. 17

Quelques remarques sur le congé injustifié et mal fondé de l'archimandrite Johannes (Johansen) et sur l'histoire et la situation en Scandinavie en général

L'archimandrite Johannes Johansen est prêtre dans notre Archevêché depuis l'année 1980, c'est à dire qu'il est parmi les prêtres avec la plus longue ancienneté, et en Scandinavie il est incontestablement le prêtre le plus expérimenté, ce qui signifie que l'archimandrite Johannes a suivi et promu à travers plus que 35 ans le développement orthodoxe dans nos pays, et en conséquence il connaît personnellement la plupart du clergé et une grande partie des fidèles dans les paroisses et les communautés (au moins au Norvège et au Danemark)

Au commencement des années -80 le jeune (à l'époque) père Johannes était chargé de la reconstruction de la paroisse Saint Nicolas à Oslo, paroisse qui était à ce moment là «quasi-morte» et sans activité à cause de la grave maladie de son prêtre et recteur depuis 1952, le père Thérapon.

Dans la même période, commencement des années 1980, le père Johannes était désigné comme deuxième prêtre dans la paroisse Alexandre Nevskij à Copenhague pour aider le vieux et malade recteur de cette paroisse, le père Alexis Cipurdejev, dans une situation où le ROCOR («les synodales») était en train d'occuper et de voler l'église à Copenhague, appartenant à notre archevêché depuis les années 1920, un vol qui était malheureusement effectué en 1984 sous la conduite du jeune (à l'époque) évêque Marc de l'Église Synodale (maintenant archevêque de ROCOR, résidant à Munich, Allemagne)

Une des conséquences de ce vol de l'église d'Alexandre Nevskij à Copenhague était la formation au Danemark cette même année, 1984, d'un groupe de fidèles orthodoxes «danophones», qui n'acceptait ni le vol ni la russification totale de leur vieille paroisse. Ce groupe avait, depuis 1984 et jusqu'à la formation de notre paroisse actuelle en 2001, une certaine activité avec célébrations de la divine liturgie en langue danoise quelques fois par année sous la direction de l'archimandrite Johannes qui faisait les visites nécessaires à Copenhague comme célébrant pour maintenir et renforcer l'orthodoxie locale. Notre paroisse indépendante d'aujourd'hui, la Protection de la Mère de Dieu, est, on peut dire, le «héritier» de cette activité sous la conduite du père Johannes à travers 17 ans.

Donc, la fondation de notre paroisse au Danemark et son développement est étroitement liée au père Johannes. C'était sur sa recommandation que nous étions établis en 2001 avec la bénédiction de Mgr. Serge comme communauté «filiale» de la paroisse Saint Nicolas d'Oslo. C'était sur la recommandation du père Johannes que moi-même j'étais ordonné en 2002 diacre par Mgr. Serge à Paris. Et c'était sur la recommandation du père Johannes, finalement, que j'étais ordonné prêtre en 2003 par Mgr. Gabriel à Oslo. – Le père Johannes restait recteur («à la distance») de notre paroisse jusqu'à 2005, année où Mgr. Gabriel décidait que nous étions «murs» pour l'indépendance, et Mgr. Gabriel installait moi-même comme recteur de la paroisse cette même année.

L'activité et l'effort du père Johannes à travers les années ne se limite pas au Danemark. Sur son initiative sont fondées à Norvège, son propre pays, plusieurs communautés, à Bergen, à Bodø, à Neiden. En plus est fondée sur son initiative une propre paroisse à Sandnes (Stavanger), paroisse pour le moment sans prêtre résidant mais desservie par le père Johannes qui fait toute l'année pas mal de voyages à toutes ces groupes et communautés.

L'archimandrite Johannes a, à côté de son propre paroisse à Oslo et toutes les communautés, fondé un monastère (un scete), Skite de Saint Tryphon, situé à Hurdal, Norvège. Ce scete a été, et l'est encore, d'une très grande importance pour la vie orthodoxe (la vie spirituelle) en Scandinavie.

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Laissez-moi mentionner aussi que à travers ses plus que 35 ans de service, en toute loyauté vis-à-vis l'Exarchat de Paris et le patriarcat de Constantinople, l'archimandrite Johannes a fait un très grand et très important travail avec la traduction des textes liturgiques en norvégien/danois, un effort sans lequel c'est plus que difficile de s'imaginer comment nous pourrions continuer et développer notre vie orthodoxe, surtout nos liturgies et offices en langue locale.

En 2005 était introduit, par Mgr. Gabriel, une re-vitalisation de l'institution des doyennés dans l'Archevêché. Était désigné en 2005 comme doyen du Norvège et Danemark l'Archimandrite Johannes Johansen, et pour la Suède était désigné l'Archimandrite Matthias Nordström, Stockholm. À la décès de ce dernier plus tard la même année, 2005, l'Archimandrite Johannes fut désigné comme doyen de toute la Scandinavie, et l'archiprêtre Angel Velitchkov a suivi l'archimandrite Matthias comme prêtre et recteur à Stockholm.

La dédication et le grand effort à travers plus que 35 ans de l'archimandrite Johannes pour la vie orthodoxe en Scandinavie sont de la plus grande importance. C'est pour cette raison, je suppose, que à l'Assemblée Générale de l'Exarchat en 2007 Mgr. Gabriel proposait le même archimandrite Johannes comme son évêque auxiliaire. La proposition de Monseigneur était accepté, unanimement, par les délégués de l'AG. Mais cette élection n'a jamais été effectué. L'archimandrite Johannes était rejeté, apparemment, par le patriarcat et cela dans une façon très désagréable. Depuis l'AG en 2007 il n'a reçu absolument aucune explication de ce rejet. Tout est resté silence concernant le rejet d'une personne tout à fait qualifié à l'épiscopat et, encore une fois, élu unanimement par les délégués d'une AGO de l'Archevêché. On peut supposer – mais cela n'est que une supposition – que la raison de ce rejet reste chez le Métropolitite (à l'époque) Pavlos du Patriarcat Oecuménique (et ami personnel du patriarche) qui résidait à Stockholm plus que 30 ans presque sans le moindre activité ecclésiale, et que ce métropolitite inactif ne supportait pas l'idée d'un autre évêque (actif!) en Scandinavie (le Métropolitite Pavlos a été remplacé par le Mét. Kleopas, il y a quelques années)

Pour la complétion de ce portrait personnel et cette esquisse de l'histoire depuis 1980 de notre archevêché en Scandinavie, laissez-moi ajouter que:

Le hiéromoine Seraphin était ordonné diacre en 2003 à Oslo par Mgr. Gabriel ... sur la recommandation du père Johannes.

Le père Bengt Hagström (Göteborg, la Suède) ordonné prêtre en 2008 à Paris par Mgr. Gabriel ... sur la recommandation du père Johannes

Les pères Olav Lerseth et Christoforos Schuff (le dernier suspendu en 2017 par Mgr. Jean) de Norvège tous les deux ordonnés prêtres en Norvège par Mgr. Gabriel en 2008 ... sur la recommandation du père Johannes.

Le père diacre Urban, Överkalix, la Suède, ordonné en 2008 en Norvège par Mgr. Gabriel. ... sur la recommandation du père Johannes

Le père diacre Lazare Kold (Copenhague) ordonné en janvier 2010 à Paris par Mgr. Gabriel ... sur la recommandation du père Johannes et de moi-même (plus tard, en novembre 2016, le diacre Lazare était ordonné prêtre par Mgr. Jean à Paris, sur recommandation de moi-même).

Le père diacre Irakli, Copenhague, ordonné en novembre 2010 à Oslo par Mgr. Gabriel ... sur mon recommandation et celle du père Johannes.

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Toutes les ordinations mentionnés ci-dessus sont faites sur la recommandation de l'Archimandrite Johannes (Johansen).

Je voudrais ajouter que à travers des dernières cinq années a été bâti à Oslo une toute nouvelle, grande et impressionnante, église orthodoxe, presque une cathédrale. Cela aussi sur l'initiative de l'archimandrite Johannes Johansen. Et que à Hurdal, dans le Skite de Saint Tryphon au milieu de la forêt est bâti une très belle petite église byzantine, encore une fois avec l'archimandrite Johannes comme force motrice.

À quoi sert un tel portrait et une telle histoire (tout à fait insuffisant)? L'intention en est de poser quelques questions:

Est-ce-que c'est juste que un tel homme, prêtre et moine loyal et capable, qu'il soit congédié (probablement à cause d'une véritable conspiration, avec des lettres de plainte envoyées à Paris, de la part de trois ou quatre personnes, y inclus deux prêtres, qui se sont tournés contre leur bienfaiteur)) congédié le 1er mai 2014 comme doyen par le nouveau (et à l'époque très jeune) archevêque de l'Exarchat? Congédié sans aucun contact préalable, sans un coup de téléphone, sans échanges par lettres ou même par courriel, sans confrontation personnel, sans aucune explication, sans que l'archevêque connaisse personnellement la personne qu'il prends la liberté de déprécier et congédier avec arrogance et avec un trait de plume épiscopal? Est-ce-que une telle procédure est juste? À mon avis absolument non!

Et en plus, est-ce-que c'est juste que une élection unanime d'une AGO en 2007 d'un candidat pour l'épiscopat soit reçu et traité par le patriarcat selon la méthode préféré de la diplomatie byzantine: Silence absolue! Il grande silenzio!

À mon avis, encore une fois, non! Pour la vie orthodoxe en Scandinavie il aurait été un très grand avantage avec un évêque local, avec un évêque qui connaît personnellement les paroisses, les prêtres, les fidèles; qui connaît les situations conflictuelles qui existent, qui connaît la mentalité scandinave en général, et qui prends ses décisions à base de tout cela. – Et pour la personne en question il aurait été une juste reconnaissance de son grand travail pour l'orthodoxie, pour les fidèles et pour notre archevêché en Scandinavie.

Merci, Monseigneur, pour votre attention!

Avec tout mon respect je me confie à vos prières

En Christ

L'Archiprêtre Poul Sebbelov, Danemark

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