



Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Greece Holy Synod in Resistance

First Synodal Exhortation to the Christian Flock of our Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction

Phyle, Attica
December 12, 2010 (Old Style)
† *St. Spyridon*

“For a sheep that is sealed is not easily ensnared, whereas one which is unmarked is easy prey for thieves.”
(St. Gregory the Theologian,
Patrologia Græca,
Vol. xxxvi, col. 377B)

The Renewal and Invigoration of the Seal of the Lamb

*Light-Wrought children of the Church;
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

We embrace you with a holy kiss and greet you with the Apostolic liturgical salutation: “The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all!”

On the occasion, and with the great blessing, of the Thirty-Seventh regular Convocation of our Synod of Bishops (October 4-5, 2010 [Old Style]), we, the least among your spiritual Fathers in Christ, the Bishops of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox in Resistance to the innovation of ecumenism, deem it necessary to address to you, for the love of our Savior, some words of hope, consolation, and edification.

Our desire to address the clergy, monks, nuns, and laity of our jurisdiction is all the stronger at the present historic juncture, since this

year marks, among other things, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of our Holy Synod.

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1. Our homeland, which was traversed by the Apostles and which has given birth to Saints, and the entire world are being shaken to their foundations by a crisis in many forms and at many levels, and everywhere we hear the appeal, “Back to basic values,” as these have been lived perennially and authentically in the context of the Body of Christ, our Most Holy Orthodox Church.

The foundations of a Christian society have always been love, friendship, reciprocity, compassion, self-sacrifice, moderation, integrity, honesty, and sincerity.

The disregard and, ultimately, the abandonment of these basic values, which have Christ our Savior as their sole foundation and center, have led to a disturbance of man’s inner order and a breakdown in societal cohesion, to a ruination of fundamentals, and to the creation of impasses.

Self-love in its varied forms, unrestrained consumerism, the pursuit of earthly happiness, a lack of self-respect, and, in general, a practical form of atheism, have led mankind to profound alienation and to veritable social tragedy.

• **We are called**, today, to emphasize the uniqueness of evangelical and ecclesiastical anthropology and to contribute to the peace and unity of the world, though on the indispensable precondition that we be consistent with our Christian identity and our Christocentric ethos, which springs from the Cross and Resurrection, remaining free from all worldly attachments and idolatry, being Spirit-bearing, life-bearing, and light-bearing.

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2. In periods of radical social upheaval there has always been a discernible recrudescence of so-called eschatological frenzy, of a spurious apocalyptic anxiety over the impending appearance of the Antichrist.

This leads to a fear of marks and numbers, to constant neurotic suspicions, to a pessimistic view of history, and, in the end, to an unhealthy introversion and a rejection of the achievements of technological civilization.

Orthodox eschatology, however, is active and dynamic: the Church, the holy Root and the good Olive Tree (Romans 11:16, 24), is the People of God, the New Israel, which has been redeemed by the Blood of Christ the Lamb and continues to experience exodus and tribulation as it journeys towards the New City of the *Eschaton*, in order to participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9).

• **The Church**, in its martyric exodus, confronts the elements of the world with wakeful vigilance, takes them and transforms them to the glory of God, and finds encouragement in the astoundingly hope-filled and optimistic message of the Book of Revelation, which, through a multitude of visions, symbolic depictions, parables, and hymns, portrays the majestic triumph of the Church as a recapitulation of the triumph of our Savior Christ: just as Christ prevailed through His suffering, so also the Church will prevail in its Cross-centered and Resurrectional course and will be triumphant thereafter, at the End of the Age.

• **We will deal** at length with this important and timely topic, that is, so-called eschatological frenzy, in another document, which will be published during the coming days under the title: “Proposals for Curbing the Eschatological Fear of Marks and Numbers.”

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3. This year is also the ninetieth anniversary of the Patriarchal Encyclical of 1920, which inaugurated, established, and promoted the ecclesiological heresy of ecumenism in the Christian East, and which constitutes, as everyone acknowledges, the founding charter of the ecumenical movement.

During these nine decades, ecumenism has progressed with rapid steps, one of which was the calendar innovation of 1924, while the most serious of them have been the participation of Orthodox ecumenists in the so-called World Council of Churches and their activ-

ism at all levels, theoretical and practical, in the inter-Christian and interfaith movements, which cultivate dogmatic syncretism and the relativization of the Truth.

The history of the ecumenical movement fully confirms the observation of the Divine Chrysostomos, that innovation is a “disease,” which, “once introduced, ever spawns innovations” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. LXII, col. 626) and, with the passage of time, fosters the preconditions for a change in the identity of the Church—as St. Basil the Great says, “for the wholesale transmutation of the Churches” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. XXXII, col. 424B); that is, the complete alteration of the Churches, so that they might assume a different form with regard to their stability and unanimity in the Faith.

• **It is**, therefore, opportune that we renew the vision of Orthodox resistance and walling-off—within the parameters of the Patristic and Synodal Tradition, of course—so that, “speaking the truth in love” and growing in Christ in every way, progressing spiritually until we resemble Him in all respects, and being filled “with all the fulness of God” (*cf.* Ephesians 4:15; 3:19), we might be granted the most great gift of the reunion of the Orthodox and the condemnation of heresy.

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4. We feel pain and sorrow in Christ because, at this historic turning point, the Old Calendarist Orthodox anti-ecumenists are, unfortunately, divided in the face of escalating ecumenism and the crisis in society. They are either an essential part of the crisis or are contributing, albeit unwittingly, to its worsening, whereas they ought to represent a healthy element and a way out of the crisis.

The various efforts, both in Greece and abroad, to unite the Old Calendarist anti-ecumenists, who are assuredly exponents of suffering for and witnessing to genuine Orthodoxy, have not yielded the expected fruits, and [thus] the demand for reunion remains an urgent one.

Before this impasse, and insofar as formal proceedings are lagging or breaking down, in spite of what are assuredly good intentions, we encourage and exhort our spiritual children in a fatherly way to form and cultivate amicable relations and alliances in Christ with our breth-

ren who belong to other Old Calendarist jurisdictions, and indeed at a collective level.

Parishes, monasteries, associations, committees, periodicals, websites, editorial boards, social movements, etc., have the potential to form small, interdependent and irenic societies to promote culture, Orthodox theology, and social aid and intervention, for the purpose of counteracting individual and collective introversion and despondency.

• **The “spirit”** of Orthodoxy is a spirit of freedom, hope, and joy, not a spirit of servitude, fear, and anxiety, from which our Lord continually delivers us through our participation in the Mystery of His Church, in the Mystery of His Cross and Resurrection.

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We wish to conclude our Synodal Exhortation with these humble thoughts and observations, in the Christ-filled hope that we are hereby contributing to a rekindling of zeal in the midst of the Christian Flock of our Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and to a demonstration of the deep conviction that we are not alone and forlorn in the labyrinths of history, but are the rational sheep of Christ, our Chief Shepherd, who have been signed with and bear the Seal of the Lamb.

• **“For a sheep** that is sealed is not easily ensnared,” says St. Gregory the Theologian, “whereas one which is unmarked is easy prey for thieves” (*Patrologia Græca*, Vol. xxxvi, col. 377B). That is, a sheep which has received the Seal of the Lamb (its Lord) is not easily endangered, whereas that which has not been marked (or has effaced its seal) is easy prey for thieving demons.

• **The renewal** and activation of the Seal of the Lamb, which we have been vouchsafed to receive in Holy Baptism and Chrismation, must be an unceasing process through our adopting the attitude of the publican, through self-reproach and repentance, through compassionate and self-sacrificial love, through wakefulness and prayers, and also through continual partaking of the Holy Mysteries of our Church.

May our heartfelt wishes, together with the blessing of the Theotokos and of all the Saints, strengthen, guide, and protect you in your God-pleasing journey towards an experiential encounter with the Fa-

ther, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to Whom belong all glory and thanksgiving unto the ages. Amen.

For the Holy Synod in Resistance

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