

On the Eve
by Dimitri Gontscharow

On May 17, 2007, the Act of Canonical Communion will be signed between the Moscow Patriarchate (MP) and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR). All attempts to appeal to the pastoral conscience of the pro-union adherents have failed to move their hearts. Instead, they have unleashed inquisitions, purges, denunciations and threats. Sadly, we will probably also witness show trials after May 17th, as all remaining opposition is weeded out and eradicated. Discussions about sergianism, ecumenism and all the other critical issues have been swept aside in this desperate attempt to repudiate the past. As a parting word to those who still support this union, it is important to consider the following.

On April 25, 2007, in an advertising supplement to The Washington Post called "Inside Russia," an interview appeared with Met. Kirill about the coming union. Met. Kirill starts with a short summary of church history and says, "In the 1920s, some bishops and parishes of the Russian Church Abroad **broke off** with the hierarchy of the Russian Church." That is it. That is all you need to know why union should not occur at this time and why no ROCOR member should agree to it. This is not an over-simplification, most truths in life are quite basic. When the Act is signed, we will be accepting, approving and giving credence to the MP's false version of church history. This will be an injustice of monumental proportions.

In taking this action, we will defame the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Tikhon and all those who came before him, along with the founding hierarchs of the Church Abroad, and most dangerously, the Holy New Martyrs of Russia. There is an icon of St. Tikhon, the Patriarch of Russia, in the church of St. John the Baptist in Washington, DC. On it, St. Tikhon holds a scroll in his hand containing the words, "×ääöà îè, íà ñðîäèòà ñ ïòèè èðñòîäâî ìèçîññèâîâî ìà Ìíî." (My children, do not stray from the Way of the Cross sent down to us by God.) As with many such messages, there can be several meanings, but one can be relatively assured that one of them would be that St. Tikhon would expect us to continue preserving the Russian Orthodox Church.

The pro-union side often invokes the notion that the union is God's will. In this way, they can stifle legitimate debate and intimidate those who do not understand the details. But what of the fear of God? There seems to be very little mention of that. Is the notion too old-fashioned for these progressive times? Is it no longer possible that the God who is Love can also punish His errant children? The New Martyrs died defending His Truth. They did so in opposition to the godless regime, and in many cases, they did so in opposition also to the Moscow Patriarchate. If we now negate their sacrifice by agreeing to the MP's version of the past, is it not possible that we will bring down the wrath of God upon us?

We also hear constantly that we must be obedient to the bishops, but are we not supposed to be obedient to the Holy Canons, the Church's teachings, and the many councils that came before? Or can we casually overlook them in our emotional rush for union with the Motherland? Are we to be ruled by our feelings, as is so prevalent in these amoral times, or are we governed by the Law of God and the laws of the church?

Sadly, many of the motives for forcing this union are earthly, but there are those among us who have little interest in the here and now and dedicate themselves to the service of God and the hereafter, our monastics. They are the conscience of the church and a great majority of them

oppose the union. We ignore their warning of the dangers that lie ahead at our peril. One shudders to think what surprises the MP has in store for us in the future. God help us all.