

Response to the accusations of Bishop Savvaty and the Subsequent Schism He Caused

At the very beginning of the war in Ukraine (specifically February, 2022 – and not the Donbas invasion which began in 2014), Bishop Savvati contacted Protopresbyter Victor Melehov, Secretary of the Synod of Bishops (RTOC) and Rector of the Synodal Cathedral of the Holy Resurrection in Worcester, Massachusetts, USA. Bishop Savvati requested asylum (in the USA) for himself and two of his monastics. Since the Cathedral could not accommodate three people for an indefinite period of time, his Grace's request was respectfully denied. Nonetheless, the obvious question remained. What would become of his abandoned flock?

Shortly thereafter, Bishop Savvati appealed to His Grace, Philaret, Bishop of Pallini and Western Europe with the same request. Assuming that Bishop Savvati had received a blessing from the Synod to abandon his flock, Bishop Philaret agreed and prepare a place for Bishop Savvati and his two monastics at his monastery in Greece. Upon reaching the boarder, the three were denied their attempt to leave Ukraine by the Ukrainian authorities. It was later discovered that Bishop Savvati never informed the Synod of his plans to abandon his diocese in Ukraine.

Due to the Ukrainian government's restrictions regarding leaving Ukraine, Bishop Savvati was not able to attend meetings of the Synod in Dmitrov, Russia since 2022. He did request to participate via social-media video, However, the rest of the bishops did not agree due to the sensitive discussions/decisions made during a meeting of the Synod. The Synod decided to send Bishop Savvati important questions through email and telephone calls.

The following letter of gratitude from Bishop Savvati was received by the Synod on the last day of the meeting of the Synod (28 January / 10 February, 2023):

From: Simpu <simpu@ukr.net>

Subject: благодарность

Date: February 10, 2023 at 8:36:54 PM GMT+3

To: Канцелярия Архиерейского Синода РИПЦ <mail@ripc-synod.ru>

He is and shall be dear Masters!

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your words of encouragement, consolation and for your participation! I want to express to you how important our unity and your support are to us. We are separated by distance and political events, circumstances that are insurmountable, but in the spirit of brotherly love we must always be united.

Let us try to get away from politics and unite even more strongly in the spirit of our Church. Let us try to shake off the dust and dirt of the evil trends of this world, so that we will not be condemned with the world. Let us not justify any actions of this world lying in evil, knowing that the prince of this world, under the guise of good, always wages his God-fighting irreconcilable war against good, be it politics, medicine, his false religions that talk about love for everyone and the truth, etc. - in everything there is now

his subtle devilish lie, to deceive, to seduce, if possible, even the chosen ones.

With heartfelt sorrow and pain I write to you and hope for your understanding and heartfelt participation in my feelings.

Yours +Bishop Savvaty.

Then, 2 weeks later, Bishop Savvati sends another letter:

Simpusimpu@ukr.net

26 февраля в 23:28

5 получателей

"Dear fellow bishops, Christ is among us.

I ask your forgiveness, as I was very harsh in my statements and you are right that I need to convey my point of view more calmly, the last year has been very difficult, I do not always have enough self-control, once again I ask you to forgive me.

Since our differences in views concern more politics, I will no longer touch upon clarifying these topics. The most important thing for us is that we are united in the main issues and that the unity of the Church is the most important thing for us.

Thank you for your patience, support, fatherly instructions and love for me, a sinner.

Your brother in Christ +E. Savvaty."

Meanwhile, as many already know, Bishop Savvati has been asking for donations for the buiding of his skete. Through personal/individual phone calls and mail, these solicitations were world-wide, ignoring diocesan boundaries. Nonetheless, the Synod never interfered with these endeavors.

Almost simultaneously, Bishop Savvati mailed-out an appeal, detailing his vision of the last times (again across all diocesan boundaries, and without the ruling bishops' knowledge) only to certain people, which he selectively chose because they were of "like mind" with him. He exhorts such (chosen) people to learn how they should prepare for events of the last times by joining him in a special village of seclusion (far from cities) where they would be instructed how to survive the approaching times of the antichrist:

"I would like to share with you my thoughts on the current events in the world. I think that cities will gradually become uninhabitable for Christians. This will begin after the introduction of a digital monetary system and the abolition of cash. Mandatory rules will be introduced for the right to use digital money, and there will be no others, including constant vaccination. The main concerns should be that the rules will affect religion, requirements will be introduced for which religion will be allowed to be practiced and all others will be prohibited. A universal religion will be introduced based on many years of work in ecumenism, religion will be universal, ecumenical and mandatory. For failure to comply with the rules, the violator will be deprived of their livelihood, since a social rating will be introduced - this is encouragement and punishment for loyalty to the existing system. Without digital money, it will be impossible to sell or buy, digital money will be completely controlled by artificial intelligence, and all payments, wages or basic income, mobile communications and the Internet, geolocation for movement only in designated zones (the fifteen-minute cities project being implemented throughout the world), a person's entire life, his movement, communications and food consumption, consumption of other means and goods will be taken into account, controlled and adjusted. People of this world will not see a problem in this, since they do not particularly have anything against a single mandatory religion, only Christians will refuse in a difficult situation. Persecution from the communist system and the destruction of Christians have already happened, the Church went into the catacombs, but Christians could work in enterprises and on collective farms, only not openly profess their faith. Now they are preparing a system when, without obeying the mandatory rules of religion, it will be impossible to work or use virtual digital money. A pre-Antichrist system is being prepared, which will make it impossible for Christians to be in it. All restrictions will not be introduced immediately, at first people should feel only the advantages of the new system of mutual settlements and the refusal of cash. Wars, epidemics and disasters are a tool in the hands of the forerunners of the Antichrist for a faster introduction of their single world system. All these events are predicted in the Revelation of the Apostle John the Theologian. Therefore, the only question is in the timing of how quickly this system of the beast will be introduced, when everyone will be sealed on the hand or forehead and without this it will be impossible to sell or buy. Although we do not yet see the Antichrist, we are already observing the preparation for his system. And everyone should think about how he will survive in this system. Although the answer to these questions is obvious, Christians do not want to think about their situation in advance, allegedly avoiding panic and unwillingness to fall into unnecessary anxiety. Christians will again be persecuted, the usual way of life will be destroyed, the world that demonstrated its security and loyalty will show Christians its true face and this face will be the grin of the beast from the abyss. Christians will find themselves in a hopeless situation. While the rest of the world will rejoice, Christians will suffer, since they will be able to get funds for their smartphone or chip only by becoming God-fighters and renouncing their faith. This is the horror of the approaching time. Everyone should think about their choice now, since everything happens gradually, many do not notice the changes, so counting on ignorance and suddenness, people will be caught off guard. The same comfort that the world has accustomed people to for decades, medicine, education, comfortable life in cities, will now be

possible in exchange for renouncing Christ. This satanic plan is almost ready for implementation, the countdown has begun either in months or several years. And we are not yet talking about the coming of the Antichrist himself, first the world is being prepared for his coming. As we know from the teachings of the Church, the Antichrist can come at any moment, the main condition for this is the state of Christians. Due to the depletion of grace in Christians, due to the depletion of the very remnant of Christians, the world will lose the meaning of its existence, which existed for those being saved. According to the prophecies of many Holy Fathers, there will be very few Christians left - one bishop, one priest and one layman. This is how the Holy Fathers figuratively or literally predicted the state of the Church of the last times. Many are now talking about the possible flourishing of Orthodoxy, about the restoration of the Orthodox monarchy in Russia. This is the Destiny of God and for God everything is possible. But the Lord commanded us to observe the times and years and not to miss His coming, not to confuse Him with the Antichrist, since the Antichrist will declare himself not only the king but also Christ and God. Now I focus on political events, I urge you to think carefully about what choice to make, accepting certain innovations concerning the daily life of Christians in the modern world.

Metropolitan Vitaly Ustinov:

"Evil laughs in our faces! And we carelessly chase the shadow of earthly blessings, our imaginary good fame, if only no one would disturb us, would not disturb the pace of our comfortable life. But a great temptation will come upon us, and will certainly come. We will be placed on the knife edge of life. No one will hide anywhere, in any crack; everyone will be found and put before a fatally tragic question: either with "us" or with Christ? Maybe they will not even say so, afraid to scare off the hapless Christian, but will simply ask: are you with "us"?" (end of quote)

I sent the previous messages for reflection and many have an unanswerable question - what to do?

As I have said before, over the past years and now I want to say, a Christian should have a house, a piece of land far from the city and stock up on necessities. If you cannot do it yourself, you need to unite with other believers, because together, as a community, it will be easier to survive in times of disaster. The disasters have already arrived and their intensity will increase. Many of our believers have already lost loved ones, a roof over their heads, and are forced to wander around the world. I also urge them not to rely on salvation in Europe or in cities, but to unite with believers who have a house and land. Many have left their elderly parents who live in abandoned villages, it is high time to think about this or take your parents from the city to you, if you live far from the city.

Ideally, the best thing would be to build communities together with pastors, far from cities and establish farms and get used to living on the land. In recent years, practice has shown that our believers are not ready for such ideas, and pastors are not able to organize such farms alone, since a lot of money is needed and a number of other difficulties arise. The construction of the hermitage was a great experience in this. Instead of uniting in mutual love in Christ, Christians constantly quarrel among themselves and wander off separately, since living communally means helping and giving in to each other, condescending in weaknesses and bearing each other's burdens. This understanding is absent from modern Christians. Everyone wants to dominate and quarrels and strife begin. Therefore, I once again call on everyone to think about how to survive during disasters and not to separate, but to unite communally with pastors and with their brothers and sisters. I will send this appeal to all who are of the same mind with me personally, since the Synod has not yet developed a unified opinion, therefore it is my duty to convey my thoughts privately, to those who are of the same mind with me in Christ."

This last paragraph gives some cause for alarm. Bishop Savvati sees himself having a vision foreign to most others, including his brother bishops of the Synod (Is this sobornost?). Given that Bishop Savvati grew up in the city with hardly any work experience, by having a skete built for him, he now has a vision of how to teach survival skills to city people attempting to live off the land?

Then, much to the surprise of all, Bishop Savvati, in June of 2024, announces his desire to retire:

To the Synod of Bishops of the Russian True Orthodox Church from Bishops Savvaty, Vinnitsa and Khmelnytsky.

Petition

Most Eminence Masters!

The state of my health is such that I am forced to ask you for my resignation from my position as Bishop of Vinnitsa and Khmelnytsky and to grant me permission to retire.

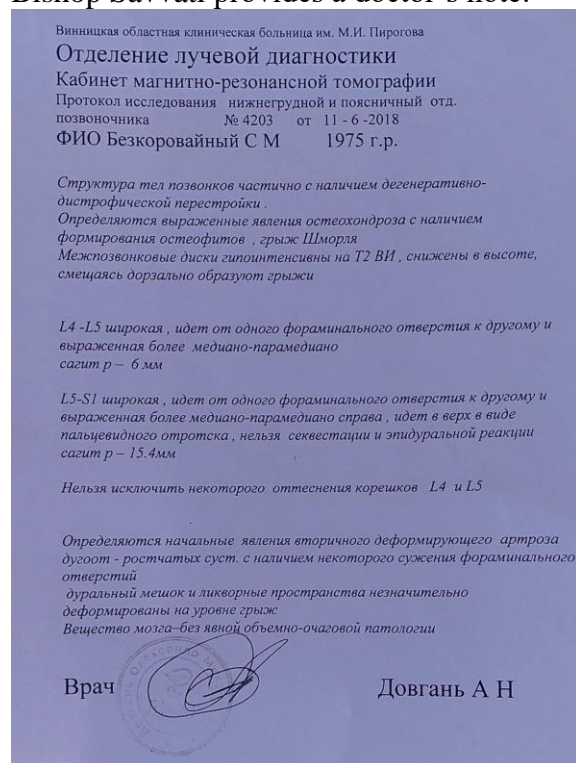
Several years ago I received a severe spinal injury, I was scheduled for surgery and was offered to apply for disability, due to the lack of opportunity to go the operation, I suffered from an illness on my legs, did not go to the hospital for treatment, as a result of which I lost sensation in one leg and acquired constant acute pain in the spine. It has become physically impossible to fulfill my duties of constant service in the church and trips to visit parishioners in need, since my diseased spine does not allow me to stand or sit for a long time, all this causes serious pain. After consulting with a professor in medical circles about my illness, it turns out that this problem will remain with me forever, I am prohibited from exerting myself due to prolonged standing on my feet, and I need constant care and attention to this problem.

In this regard, I ask that you relieve me of my duties of governing the Diocese and that I spend the rest of my time serving the Church in solitude and prayer. Since my illness has been going on for many years, I will not change my decision and I am well aware of the necessity of this step, having thought it over and realized the need for retirement due to serious health complications.

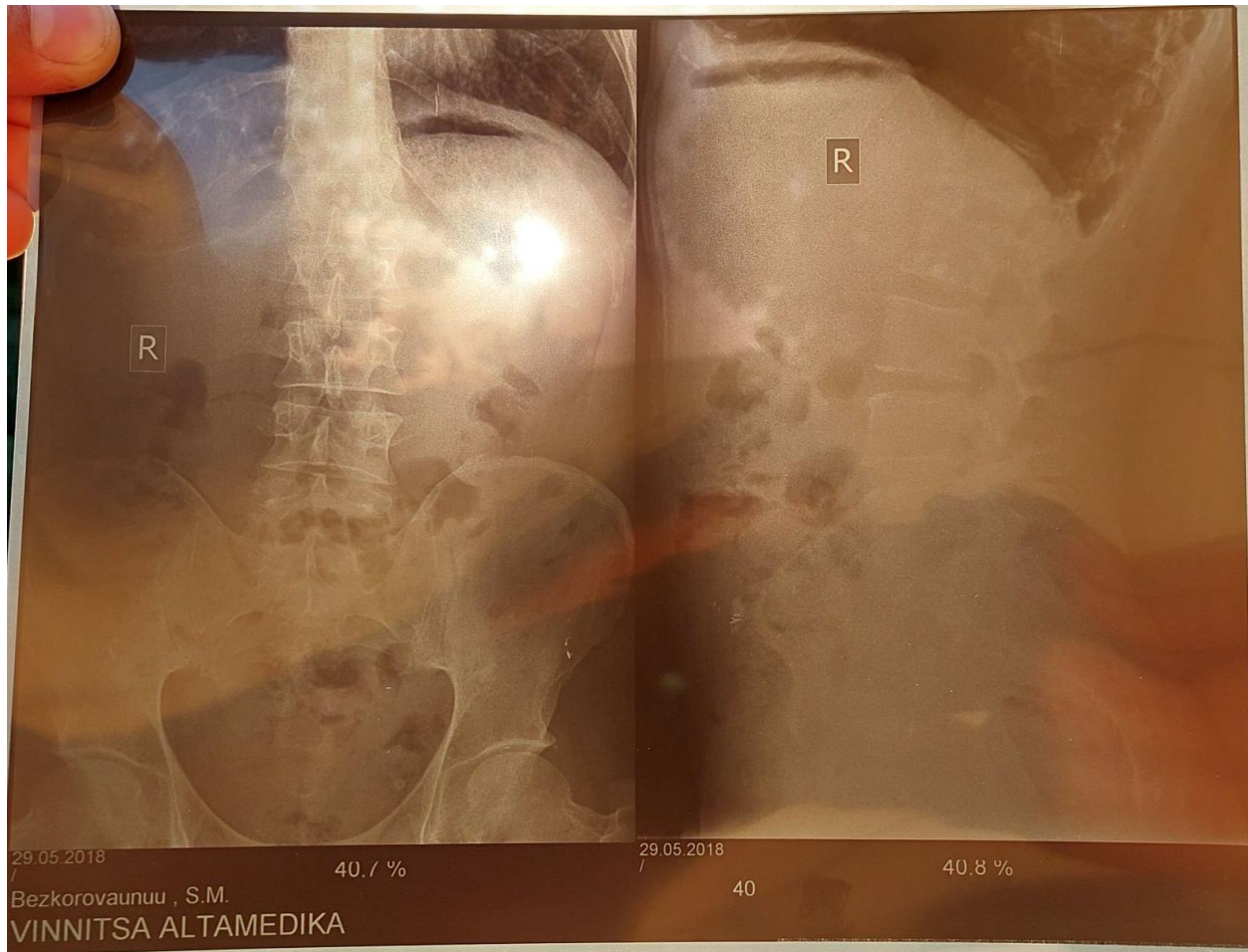
06/29/07/12/2024

Holy Chief Apostles Peter and Paul
Bishop Savvati

Bishop Savvati provides a doctor's note:



And then, Bishop Savvati provides an X-Ray as proof of his inability to serve any longer:



During the 6 month period after Bishop Savvati's retirement announcement until the meeting of the Synod in December of 2024, according to his own postings and eye-witness accounts, Bishop Savvati continued to serve regularly at his cathedral.

Nonetheless, having not heard anything to the contrary regarding his announcement, the Synod decided to grant Bishop Savvati his request. Yet, to be certain that Bishop Savvati understood the canonical conditions regarding the retirement of a bishop, the Synod decided to provide him with this information, along with a list of requirements needed by his replacement, the next ruling bishop of his diocese. The Synod then gave Bishop Savvati 5 days to respond in case he decided to change his mind:



**РУССКАЯ ИСТИННО-ПРАВОСЛАВНАЯ ЦЕРКОВЬ
АРХИЕРЕЙСКИЙ СИНОД**

Канцелярия Синода Русской Истинно-Православной Церкви: тел.: +7 (495) 374-9701, e-mail: mail@ripc-synod.ru

11/ December 24, 2024

**Venerable Daniel the Stylite
To His Grace Savvaty
Bishop of Vinnitsa and Khmelnytsky**

Christ is in our midst!

The Synod of Bishops has received your letter with a request to retire you for health reasons. Of course, we are concerned about your health and disappointed with your decision. We regret to see that your request to retire is formulated as a demand, not a request. You must understand that demanding such conditions from your fellow bishops of the Synod of Bishops is something unusual. Since we are your fellow bishops, your joys and sorrows are our joys and sorrows, as it should be for each of us.

We inform you that the Synod of Bishops has decided to grant your request to retire.

However, you must first provide the information requested below and then confirm that you accept the conditions that a retired bishop must meet.

Please provide the Synod of Bishops with the following information about your diocese:

- 1. The number (rank and appointments) of clergy you have (or had) and the dates of their ordination during your tenure as ruling bishop of your diocese;**
- 2. Then the number of clergy (their rank and appointments) who left you during your tenure as ruling bishop of your diocese and the reasons for their departure;**
- 3. The number of parishes and monasteries you have or had, their locations, the number of members, the names of parish/monastery officials (archimandrite, abbot, rector, warden, secretary, treasurer, etc.) and contact information. If specific parishes/monasteries have left or have been closed, please indicate the reasons for such events;**
- 4. Financial report on income and expenses related to the construction of your skete and development of the adjacent territory;**
- 5. Financial report on income and expenses for the last 5 years related to your church in Vinnitsa in honor of the Icon of the Mother of God of All Who Sorrow Joy with.**

As for your retirement, we need to inform you of the conditions that you must agree to. These conditions must be responsibly considered by you in order to make an informed decision.

In satisfying your request, we inform you of the following conditions:

- 1. You can no longer be a voting member of the RTOC Synod of Bishops;**
- 2. The Synod must assign you to the Vinnitsa parish with the possibility of serving as a hieromonk;**

3. The Synod must appoint a ruling bishop for your former diocese, to whom you must be subordinate in regard to your ministry, both liturgical and spiritual, and in all other activities in the diocese and RTOC;
4. If you find that your health has improved, you may submit a petition for reinstatement as ruling bishop. Of course, this decision will be made by the Synod of Bishops. It may be rejected or approved.

The Synod of Bishops wishes you to seriously consider the above conditions. If you find that you wish to withdraw your request for retirement, please inform the Synod of Bishops in writing within 5 days. Otherwise, your retirement will take effect after this period. In any case, the Synod of Bishops still expects you to provide the 5 points of information requested above.

Of course, we must all pray for conciliarity and love in our Synod of Bishops in these difficult times. Some days seem darker than others, but we must heed the instruction of our Savior - "Thy will be done."

With love in Christ,

**+ Archbishop Tikhon
Omsk and Siberia,**

**+ Archbishop Veniamin
Black Sea and Kuban,**

+ Bishop Germogen of Gomel and Bryansk

**+ Bishop Philaret of Pallini
and Western Europe**

**Protopresbyter Victor Melehov
Secretary of the Synod of Bishops**

In his response to the above Synodal approval of his request, Bishop Savvati admitted that he lied regarding his need to retire due to conditions of his health. In addition to this admission, Bishop Savvati provided a list of accusations against the Synod, as reasons for his breaking all relations with the Synod Bishops of the Russian True Orthodox Church:

To the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church

APPEAL

Your Eminence For almost 3 years now, the full-scale, bloody war of the Russian Federation in Ukraine has been going on, which has resulted in more than a million innocent victims. The initiator and conductor of this madness is the satanic power, which occupied more than 100 years ago the once desecrated by God's permission of Holy Rus'. This power and all those communicating with it were anathematized by the legitimate church authority at the very beginning of this feast of Satan, which has not ceased to this day and in recent years has played out on an incredible scale. Although the majority, including the church, almost do not notice and do not detect this due to the gradual habituation of the people to evil and zombification by the media. This satanic power did not hide its godless essence before, and now, in essence, remaining the same, having transformed into an "angel of light", crosses itself in a cell, is present in ancient temples during services, shows candles, and loudly announces that denazification and demilitarization are taking place in a neighboring country. At the same time, cities are being wiped off the face of the earth, thousands of innocent people are dying: old people, women, children. The Holy Church has always been unjustly oppressed, has always been against evil, has defended its children. The Soviet false church, as we know, in favor of the godless, renounced the New Martyrs and Confessors and called their work politics. The True Church, especially in its lyceums of saints such as the Holy Martyr Philip of Moscow, St. Patriarch Tikhon, St. John of Shanghai and many others, has always grieved for its suffering, offended children. The Synod of the RTOC, unfortunately does otherwise, it does not call evil evil, does not support the suffering flock in Ukraine either in word or deed, and forbids any assistance, does not forbid its children to participate directly or in the regime of military actions in the government, says that Ukrainian incomes are declining in the "problem territory", does not want to excuse themselves from the words that "at present, the goals of Russian Orthodox people and the Putin regime have

developed." How can the goals of the Holy Church, the immaculate Bride of Christ, coincide with the representatives of the God-fighters and Satanists? Never, not in one moment, can they touch or intersect. This is the same as saying that the goals of Judas, the Sanhedrin, Herod, the devil coincided with the Goal of the Messiah, who came to destroy the works of the devil. The Holy Church is a lamp that should not be under a bushel or bed, illuminating "with the rays of the Gospel truth all the events that occur in life, including political ones, without interfering in "them directly" (Saint Philaret of New York). Our Synod did not do this, and even forbade its flock any political disputes under the pretext of maintaining some illusory peace in the parishes. For three years, the Synod wrote, asked questions to many clergy and laity of our church, but all this was ignored. Although in 2004, the Synod of the RTOC in its District Letter gave a very truthful assessment of the authorities and the state of the Russian Federation, calling it "anti-Christian". Now, in the same regime, its virus has worsened many times, but the Synod is silent and forbids raising these issues, including with me. And those who touch on this topic are called Russophobes. This is a very memorable, negative symptom, which the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia at the beginning of the last century defined as Sergianism. Fortunately, they remained with our rich spiritual heritage, their hard-won spiritual experience and holy example. Although the Synod declares its non-involvement in sergiantism, in fact it is in many ways similar to the MP:

1. No denunciation of the vicious deeds occurring in the world in the evil of the Congress, complete loyalty to the policies of the authorities, including war.
2. Violation of the 34 Rules of the Holy Apostles. Vertical authority, lack of conciliarity, ignoring criticism from believers, lack of any reaction to election letters with reason to explain the actions of the synod. This is exactly how they live in the MP, this is the way of life of Kirill Gundryaev gives the command from above and does not accept criticism. Conciliarity implies unity and attention to the consideration of criticism and opinions of the entire Church.
3. The synod does not have an adequate eschatological awareness that we have already entered the era of the apocalypse. Lulling the vigilance of believers regarding the events taking place in the world: globalization, digitalization, the transfer of almost all spheres of life under the control of artificial intelligence, total digital control, coercion to participate in destructive operations imposed by the authorities. Complete oblivion of who controls the modern world.
4. Modern Russia is following the path of aggression, Nazism and fascism, repeating the path of previous dictators-conquerors. The pro-war and pro-imperial policy of the MP and the government of the Russian Federation fundamentally contradicts the Gospel teaching, Christian worldview and Orthodox theology and is an outright apology for anti-Gospel ideas: violence, xenophobia and genocide. In the spring of 2024, the 25th World Russian Council was held in Moscow under the chairmanship of Kirill Gundryaev with the participation of the president, most members of the MP synod and representatives of all branches of government and social groups of Russian society, a total of about 500 participants. A number of documents were adopted, including those concerning the war in Ukraine. In particular, the document "The Present and Future of the Russian World" states the following: "Upon completion of the SVO, the entire territory of modern Ukraine should enter the zone of exclusive influence of Russia. The possibility of the existence of an independent Ukrainian state on this territory should be completely excluded." Therefore, what our synod considers positive ideas for Russia is an approval of crimes. The special military operation against Ukraine was called by Patriarch Kirill a "holy war" to protect Holy Rus' and fulfill the mission of the restrainer, who protects the world from the onslaught of globalism and the West that has fallen into Satanism." In particular, the statement of the MP about the spiritual and civilizational exclusivity of Russians and the "Russian world" falls under the anathema of the heresy of ethnophyletism proclaimed at the local Council of Constantinople in 1872.

Russia has long ceased to be an Orthodox country that brings an example of virtue and Christianity to the world. Under specious slogans, Russia brings outright Satanism to the world, accusing the West and its long-suffering neighbors of its own actions.

5. Various heresies and delusions are circulating in the parishes and among the church people of the RTOC: chiliasm, the veneration of Rasputin and Ivan the Terrible, the name-worshipping heresy, maintaining the cult of war ("sacred war"), the expectation of the flourishing of Russia and the Orthodox Tsar, neo-fascism and nationalism.

I, not wanting to participate in these lawlessness and this theater of the absurd, feeling my spiritual loneliness, filed a petition six months ago to be retired, but seeing that nothing is changing in the synod and realizing that even being retired I will be in prayerful and Eucharistic communion with the synod and therefore an accomplice to its sins, I break this communion and remain with my flock in an autonomous position on the basis of the 15th rule of the Two-Session Council of Constantinople, protecting myself and the flock from complicity in Sergianism.

+ Unworthy Savvaty, Bishop of Vinnitsa and Khmelnytsky
December 15/28, 2024 Holy Martyr Eleutherius.

For the above schism created by Bishop Savvati, the Synod responded with the following Ukaze:

16/29 December 2024
27th week after Pentecost.

Holy Forefathers.
To His Grace Savvaty
Bishop of Vinnytsia and Khmelnytsky

UKAZE

In your letter of 15/28 December 2024, you accused the Synod of Bishops of the heresy of Sergianism and declared the interruption of Eucharistic communion on the basis of the 15th Canon of the Second Council of Constantinople (861). You did not provide evidence of open preaching from the pulpit of the heresy of Sergianism by the bishops of the RTOC or in the synodal documents of the Synod of Bishops of the RTOC. Thus, you have raised false accusations against the Synod of Bishops and have fallen under the Church sanctions mentioned in the first part of the 15th rule of the Second Council of Constantinople, which provides for the deprivation of the priestly rank for causing a church schism.

The Synod of Bishops of the RTOC has reviewed your letter of December 15/28, 2024 and has decided: based on the 15th rule of the Second Council of Constantinople, taking into account your request for retirement from June 26/July 12, 2024, to retire you and prohibit you from any form of sacred service until your repentance and further notification from the Synod of Bishops.

If you continue to serve during this period, the Synod of Bishops will take further action.

+ Archbishop Tikhon
Omsk and Siberia,

+ Archbishop Benjamin
Black Sea and Kuban,

+ Bishop Hermogenes of Gomel and Bryansk

+ Bishop Philaret of Pallini
and Western Europe

Protopresbyter Victor Melekhov
Secretary of the Synod of Bishops

Given that Bishop Savvati admitted that he lied regarding his need to retire due to reasons of health, the Synod has every reason to dismiss his above accusations as inadmissible in a spiritual court, where if even one statement of the plaintiff against the accused is shown to be false, the entire case of the plaintiff is discharged, and the punishment intended for the accused falls upon the head of the plaintiff. Nonetheless, for the sake and preservation of the flock, the Synod will address the above accusations.

Having reviewed Bishop Savvati's accusations against the Synod, the Synod finds the entire letter to be saturated with the political polemics and narratives of the West, which by its own admission drove the "Orange Revolution," and which created the conflict of the Donbass beginning in 2014. Despite Bishop Savvati's attempt to politically link the Synod's position to that of the Moscow Patriarchate by creating implications of what has not been said by the RTOC Synod, nothing else in his letter announcing his schism may be attributed to the Synod's position

of heresy, or canonical transgressions, as required by the “15-го правила двукратного Константинопольского собора.” As a matter of fact, nothing in Bishop Savvaiti’s letter of accusations against the Synod may be viewed as anything spiritual, or even canonical, but rather merely a repetition of Western political narratives found in such venues as social internet media and Western news media.

Canon XV of the 1st-2nd Council of Constantinople (861) states:

The rules laid down with reference to Presbyters and Bishops and Metropolitans are still more applicable to Patriarchs. So that in case any Presbyter or Bishop or Metropolitan dares to secede or apostasise from the communion of his own Patriarch, and fails to commemorate the latter’s name in accordance with custom duly fixed and ordained, in the divine Mystagogy, but, before a conciliar verdict has been pronounced and has passed judgement against him, creates a schism, the holy Council has decreed that this person shall be alienated from every priestly function if only he be convicted of having committed this transgression of the law. Accordingly, these rules have been sealed and ordained as respecting those persons who under the pretext of charges against their own presidents separate themselves, and create a schism and disrupt the union of the Church.

But as for those who on account of some heresy condemned by the Holy Councils, or Fathers, withdrawing themselves from communion with their president, who, that is to say, is preaching the heresy publicly, **and** teaching it barehead in church, such persons not only are not subject to any canonical penalty on account of their having walled themselves off from any and all communion with the one called a Bishop before any conciliar or synodal verdict has been rendered, but, on the contrary, they shall be deemed worthy to enjoy the honour which befits them among Orthodox Christians. For they have defied, not Bishops, but pseudo-bishops and pseudo-teachers; **and** they have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions

Up until point No. 5 of Bishop Savvati’s “ОБРАЩЕНИЕ,” his letter reads more in the style of a contemporary political rally. Much is said (exagerations with some lies, all blended with a few facts), but nothing is actually substantively proven. For this, and for his self-proclaimed schism, the Synod suspended Bishop Savvati using the same canon with which Bishop Savvati accused the Synod, only applying the first paragraph instead of the second paragraph, as attempted by Bishop Savvati. The tactic used by Bishop Savvati is much the same as we may find within the internet on social media. Say much, attack with a broad range of buck-shot, and hope the reader may find something that might ignite his support.

Here, Bishop Savvati, to justify his own cause, attempts to use the example of the New Martyrs and Saints of the Church, who initially spoke freely against the Bolsheviks as they (the Bolsheviks) usurped the government and the Church of Russia. It appears that Bishop Savvati attempts to draw a parallel of 1917 to today, thereby comparing the confession of faith of the New Martyrs to his own confession, albeit of a political nature. Bishop Savvati attacks/condemns the government of the Russian Federation and the Moscow Patriarchate’s Sergianist cooperation with said government, and from this, stretches the conclusion that the Synod’s (RTOC) lack of support for his battle cry makes the Synod (RTOC) a co-conspirator of the government’s proclamations/politics and the Moscow Patriarchate’s Sergianism. Being in such confusion himself, he attempts to lead the faithful into his political schism. Of course, unless it is diabolically planned, most schisms are the result of confusion, spiritual or otherwise.

Here, perhaps, we might offer Bishop Savvati some sympathy and understanding. In spite of him being a leader of the Church, as a bishop, he still is rather young and lacking in experience. As others in Ukraine, he is undergoing a war and constant insecurity caused by bombings, news of catastrophic events, and then there is the constant “bombardment” of propaganda from the social media on the internet, where sly and devious individuals attempt to influence the thoughts of many. Unfortunately, Bishop Savvati’s letter seems to reflect such influence. All this could explain his earlier attempts to abandon his flock and flee Ukraine for another country. It might shed some light on his attempt to teach others (of like mind with himself) how to survive in these last times (Here, too, he seems to borrow ideas similar to those on social media.). Perhaps such influence caused him to distance himself from his brother bishops of the Synod, claiming they have no understanding of this issue. Nonetheless, having accepted the position of bishop, he needs to lead his flock with wisdom in word and deed, not only for a heated moment, but for the future for its safety and salvation, remembering that fear is something sent by the evil one.

And now, it is still necessary to address Bishop Savvati’s attempt to draw a parallel from the events of 1917 to his situation today in the Ukraine.

First, taking example from our Savior Himself. As we know, the Pharisees recognized Him as the possible King of Israel, yet they expected an earthly king, for such was their mindset – to establish a kingdom of this world, which would eliminate Roman dominance, and where Israel would rule supreme. Of course, our Savior would have no part in their political schemes, and they hated him for that. Furthermore, we know how the Lord responded to their attempt to have Him make a political stand. Our Lord said, “Give unto Cesar that which is Cesar’s, and to God that which is God’s.” In keeping with the Lord’s example, during the years of the early Church, neither the Apostles, nor the martyrs that followed, made any political statements or attacks against the existing governments. The first cooperation with a government was that of a monarchy, when St. Constantine recognized and supported the Church at the First Ecumenical Council (325 AD). This began the Church’s relationship with the “Anointed One.” The first deviation from this relationship was through the Roman Schism (1054). The initial fruits of this schism were rather quick and certainly political, to a dangerous degree. Within a century of the Pope’s schism, he formed an army of his own, the Crusaders. Did Christ, or the apostles, or any other Orthodox bishop or Patriarch ever have an army? Of course, we all know what happened to the former Roman Church in the subsequent centuries, and to date.

Now, to address the events of 1917, the Russian Orthodox Church was well established by this time, as was the Russian Monarchy. There was a good degree of free expression and freedom of speech. This can be demonstrated by the degree of influence of Western thought provided through publications and the spread of propaganda by the Socialists, Communists, Bolsheviks, etc. Seeing the attack upon the Church and the Monarchy, many defenders of the status quo freely expressed their quite logical disagreement with the revolutionaries. From Patriarch to peasant, they protested what they clearly saw was unjust. Their protest was grounded in trying to defend the Russian Orthodox way of life, which they cherished and did not wish to lose. They were defending what they believed they still had. When the Bolsheviks took control of the government, these faithful people quickly realized their loss of freedom, including that of their speech. Those who attempted to resist were quickly removed – arrested, torture and martyred. Those who repeated the Bolshevik narratives were praised and encouraged to continue. The

Russian Orthodox Church realized that to survive, it must enter into a catacomb form of existence. The Catacomb Church (i.e., the Russian Orthodox Church) learned how to exist under persecution. Even when Stalin's new church (under the new "Patriarch" Sergius appointed by Stalin) claimed to the rest of the world, that there were no persecutions in the Soviet Union, the Catacomb Church knew it needed to remain quiet to survive. The Catacomb Church depended on the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russian to continue proclaiming and arguing for the truth, which it did without fail.

Then, by 1992 the Communist government of the Soviet Union collapsed to form another government, perhaps more democratic. For several decades freedoms of speech and worship were restored, albeit with exceptions. People cautiously (especially those coming out of the catacombs) began to speak openly. Then, the war in Ukraine began. It became difficult to speak against the war, or for the other side, under both the government of the Russian Federation and that of Ukraine. Along with closing certain churches, Ukraine forbade all things Russian. Does this not sound familiar of events that might (or might not) return? The difference today is the society of the former Soviet Union is not coming from a culture of a monarchy, where one could express thoughts with relative freedom.

It must be noted that this is not only a phenomenon of the former Soviet Union. With the Covid experience, we see how free speech and thought were forbidden in the West and the rest of the world.

Of course, war is a terrible event under any circumstance. Yet, a war consisting of brother against brother is even worse. Nonetheless, Orthodox Christians, still remembering their catacomb existence, know how to respond. They remember that we are in this world, but not of this world. We are pilgrims passing through this world to our Jerusalem on high.

The Russian True Orthodox Church has clergy, parishes, and a faithful flock both in Russia and Ukraine. We must not put them in jeopardy with political outbursts. Does anyone think that personal opinions will alter the course of nations, or, will it place the faithful under scrutiny, perhaps leading to their arrests and persecution? Given the circumstances, the Church must continue defending the faith, supporting the flock, and avoiding the politics of this world. Indeed, each may have his own opinion. Yet, the Church must remain apolitical, even as in the times of the early Church. The Church must continue its work even as it has under catacomb conditions.

Bishop Savvati wishes to teach people survival skills during the last times, preparing them for a secluded life, away from society, as they await the advent of the antichrist. Simultaneously, he boldly proclaims the narrative of a regime and its supporters on social media. Does he not see the ironic contradiction of his vision(s)? He seems to not understand that by his "freedom of speech" he may be encouraging others toward their own demise. Also, he seems to not understand that repeating the narrative of support for or against a regime today, and being popularly encouraged by the loud cheers of a politicized social media, all might change tomorrow.

Point No. 5 of Bishop Savvati's letter needs some attention of its own. Bishop Savvati accuses the Synod as follows:

5. Various heresies and delusions are circulating in the parishes and among the church people of the RTOC: chiliasm, the veneration of Rasputin and Ivan the Terrible, the name-worshipping heresy, maintaining the cult of war ("sacred war"), the expectation of the flourishing of Russia and the Orthodox Tsar, neo-fascism and nationalism.

First of all, Bishop Savvati's letter is addressed to the Synod of the RTOC, accusing it of the heresy of Sergianism. Point No. 5 addresses what he perceives to be occurring at various parishes amongst the parishioners. The Synod decides issues which are addressed to the Synod. Local parishes are the responsibility of local ruling bishops.

Nonetheless, Bishop Savvati's list of heresies and delusions may only be categorized as a list of unsubstantiated accusations rising no higher than to the level of slander. Clearly, he wishes to embellish reasons for his schism, in order to confuse the unaware.

Finally, it is necessary to address two more topics:

In the second paragraph of Bishop Savvati's letter above, he states:

"The Synod of the RTOC, unfortunately does otherwise, it does not call evil evil, does not support the suffering flock in Ukraine either in word or deed, and forbids any assistance."

With the Synod's knowledge and approval, the Synodal Cathedral of the Holy Resurrection, Worcester, MA, USA, has a benevolent fund established to assist people wishing to donate to monasteries, churches, and people of the RTOC. It needs to be noted that, according to its records, over the past 5 years the Benevolent Fund sent over two hundred thousand dollars US (\$200,000.00) to Bishop Savvati for the building of his skete. This sum consisted of individual donations from people who live outside of Russia. This amount does not take into account what he might have received from those living in Russia or Ukraine, or those who delivered their donation through other avenues. To state that the Synod forbade such donations is at least disingenuous, if not an outright lie.

Regarding the two monastics who Bishop Savvati wished to take with him to the USA and Greece when the war began, it came to the attention of the Synod that at some point during the past 5 years they disappeared. When asking Bishop Savvati who they were, what were their names, why did they leave, where did they go? Bishop Savvati would not provide an answer.

Most recently, with the unfortunate events of Bishop Savvati's schism, one of these two brothers (Hieromonk Dositheus) came forward and spoke on the telephone with a member of the Synod to provide the the following:

The Synod has received information about the state of affairs regarding the construction of the Skete of Vl. Savvati from Hieromonk Dositheus, who is now in Romania. Before that, he and his brother were in Ukraine, somewhere in the Carpathian region, and were simply praying. The conflict between the brothers and Bishop Savvati arose because of their questions to him and their expressed disagreement with his actions. At the first stage, they were perplexed as to why Bishop Savvati was baptizing children in a hospital, which he did not specify, and many children, dozens, by sprinkling. Bishop Savvati did not accept their opinion that they should be baptized by full immersion. Bishop Savvati did not allow any disputes and they resigned themselves, then he announced that a woman whom he had brought to the Skete would live with them in their cells. They were very upset at this and asked him not to do this. After that, they were told to go wherever they wanted or to obey the order. They decided to

reconcile, Bishop Savvati declared that he was banning them from serving for disciplinary violations. He forbade the flock to communicate with them, although they asked for forgiveness. His plans changed dramatically and he bought a house nearby in the name of this very woman and all incoming funds and even materials from the skete began to be supplied to this new construction. It turns out that this new construction is managed by the brother of Bishop Savvati.

We provide the above information from a witness, without further comment.

We all knew Bishop Savvati to be quiet and reserved. Very few, if any, knew his inner thoughts. Viewing his actions over the past 5 years, we come to understand how unstable he has become, even to the point of spiritual suicide. We pray that he sees himself for what he has become, and returns to the Church through the gates of repentance, imitating the prodigal son, but not squandering his high, God-given inheritance.