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Московский Патриархат Patriarchate of Moscow Сурожская епархия Diocese of Sourozh
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To all the Clergy and Members of the Diocesan Assembly, Diocese of Sourozh

You will be aware that for some years the Cathedral parish in London has been troubled by conflict between two groups of parishioners with very different interests and, indeed, styles of churchmanship. There are those who wish to see the cathedral and the Diocese brought more directly into line with the Mother Church under the control of the Department of External Relations than was ever the case while Metropolitan Anthony was alive, while on the other hand there are those who wish to continue along the path set out by the founder of the Diocese, who was its head for more than forty years. A campaign has been underway at various degrees of intensity, both locally and on the internet, since well before Metropolitan Anthony's death, and has greatly intensified in the last four months since the outspoken criticism of the Diocese by Archpriest Andrey Teterin on 3 December 2005. Though these troubles appear to be local, they affect the health of the Diocese as a whole and in particular prevent the building of relationship between the cathedral and communities in the 'provinces'. After prayerful consideration of our situation and having listened carefully to senior members of the Diocese, I have written to Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and All Russia the letter that is enclosed. A few points require expansion. Full-time Russian priests are needed. We have been told, however, that the Patriarchate cannot supply such priests to our Diocese. What is more, priests who do come from Russia find it extremely difficult to adapt to the kind of Orthodoxy that has developed in Western Europe in parishes derived from the first Russian emigration of more than eighty years ago. **Some have pointed out that there is a huge amount of Russian money in Britain, especially in London, and that some of this could be used to finance the work of the Russian Church in this country. But money is expected to bring with it control. The continuing problems in Manchester prove this point.** This is why from the beginning Metropolitan Anthony refused categorically to accept help from the Patriarchate. The unavoidable conclusion is that finance will only be available from Russian sources for a diocese that is very different from that which Metropolitan Anthony created. It is now quite clear that we are faced with two different tasks, and that they should be kept separate. On the one hand there is a great need for pastoral care for the newly arrived Russians, and on the other, the development of the Diocese of Sourozh along the lines envisaged by Metropolitan Anthony. We have a thriving diocese with some thirty communities scattered throughout Britain. We run two children's camps, an annual conference, and publish our own liturgical texts and journal. We sponsor two very effective charities, one working in Russia, the other in Britain. You will have seen the kind of thing that is being said in petitions, open letters, on the internet and in the press. A claim is made that there is support within the Patriarchate for those who are waging the campaign against the leadership of the diocese. This claim has not been denied. Recently a 'withdrawal of labour' has been declared at the London cathedral, causing considerable disruption during Holy Week. There have been many attempts by clergy and laity at all levels to resolve the conflict. Metropolitan Anthony himself spent many hours speaking with members of the cathedral parish, but finally had to admit that he had failed. We have to accept that

the two groups have different interests and needs. Those who have embraced the vision of Metropolitan Anthony should be given the opportunity to carry this vision forward, while those who wish to create parishes that are outposts of the Patriarchate should be free to do so. The Diocese closest to ours in terms of its history and present character is the Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox parishes in Western Europe led by Archbishop Gabriel of Comana within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. I am therefore proposing that we be granted permission to seek acceptance within the Ecumenical Patriarchate on a similar basis. If my proposal is accepted by the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the clergy of the Diocese would normally be expected to follow their bishop. I do not wish to force such a move on anyone, however, and will grant canonical release to any of the clergy who wish to remain in the Moscow Patriarchate – or go elsewhere. The laity are, of course, free to position themselves where they wish. The nature of our situation is such that I have not been able to take the clergy and the Diocesan Assembly into my confidence and develop a common position. In the end, the decision to ask for release has had to be mine and mine alone. That is the nature of the bishop's role in the Orthodox Church. But I do hope that the large majority of you will understand the reasons behind the position I have adopted and will feel able to follow me. Metropolitan Anthony has left us a huge legacy and I believe we should do all we can to see it bear fruit in the years to come. Part of this legacy is his vision of a 'local' Orthodoxy in Western Europe. The Archdiocese of Russian Parishes based at rue Daru in Paris shares this vision, as does the Patriarchate of Moscow. Since the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Ecumenical Patriarchate are in communion with each other, there is no reason why we should not work together, each in our own way, for the same end. An information sheet is also enclosed and should be copied and distributed to interested parties as necessary. Yours ever in Christ,

BISHOP OF SERGIEVO Administrator Diocese of Sourozh

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9 May 2006

To: Diocesan clergy, Assembly members and concerned parties (Where possible, this letter is being sent by email because events are moving very quickly. I apologise to those who would have preferred to receive a hard copy in the post. A copy of this letter will appear on www.dioceseinfo.org.) Enclosed/attached is an English translation of the letter personally delivered to me on Sunday, 7 May 2006, by Father Michael Dudko, who is still in London. I opened the letter after the Liturgy, having already told the congregation that I had asked His Holiness Patriarch Alexis to release me to join the Ecumenical Patriarchate with any clergy and laity who might wish to follow me. I added: 'I would like to make it clear that I am completely committed to the unity of the Russian Church in Western Europe and I see the present move as the best way forward to achieving that long-term goal.' Having discussed the letter with Father Michael, I agreed not to make a final

decision until after a meeting with Patriarch Alexis, who had offered to meet me after 25 May in Moscow. However, before the meeting of the Parish Council on Monday evening Father Michael informed me that Patriarch Alexis had not been aware when he wrote to me that I had already written to Patriarch Bartholomew, and that therefore he would not, after all, be willing to see me unless I retracted that letter. After the Council meeting, at about 11.00 p.m., Fr Michael told me that the Patriarch required an immediate reply by telephone, and that a written retraction of my letter to Patriarch Bartholomew must appear on the internet the next day. I let Father Michael know that I would not be withdrawing my letter to His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew. In spite of its length, the Patriarch's letter fails to address a number of crucial issues: 1. The origins of the difficulties. The loss of 'peace and stability' to which reference is made took place well before Metropolitan Anthony's death. It goes back at least to the presence of Bishop Hilarion in the Diocese and probably before. 2. **Nationalist prejudices. An 'absence' of 'any nationalist prejudices' in the Russian Church is not evident either in Russia or in the Russian diaspora in Britain.** 3. The legacy of Metropolitan Anthony. It is not clear from the letter who is to decide what Metropolitan Anthony's legacy is and how it should be preserved. Should it be those who have worked with him for many years, or those who have not? 4. Inter-Orthodox cooperation. Not only has the same kind of conflict that has broken out here been seen wherever there is a large new Russian diaspora, but the Patriarchal Church has taken other jurisdictions to court both in France and elsewhere. Indeed, there is still little evidence of 'collaboration in brotherly action'. 5. Relations with ROCOR. Although ROCOR seems ready to re-establish eucharistic communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow, they do not wish to enter into an administrative union. Why? 6. Support by the Patriarchate. **On 30 March 2006 I wrote to Metropolitan Kirill asking him to make it clear that the people organising petitions at the cathedral did not have the support of the DECR and the Patriarch. I received no reply.** 7. Past and present. The trials of the Russian Church during the communist period – real and terrible though they were – are not relevant to the current situation. What is more, the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia are revered here in Britain as they are in Russia itself. In addition, I should like to make the following points: 1. In March 2006, I wrote to Archbishop Anatoly asking for his help in resolving the problems in the London parish. As I pointed out to Metropolitan Kirill on 30 March, Archbishop Anatoly nowhere says in his reply that he intends to help me. Indeed, he made a similar attempt to that in the Patriarch's letter to suggest that under Metropolitan Anthony all was well and that the 'troubles' began under my administration. 2. The question of a break of communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, raised by Father Michael Dudko with me and with the London parishioners last Sunday afternoon, is one that will only arise if the Moscow Patriarchate imposes it. 3. That 'pearl of great price', the unity of the Body of Christ, can only be achieved, with the help of God, by good will and good practice, not by machination and demand. 4. I do believe that the way forward is to separate two very different tasks, the pastoral care for the thousands of newly-arrived Russian-speaking Orthodox in Britain, and the carrying forward of the forms of diocesan life that developed in this country under Metropolitan Anthony. Each can then be allowed to develop within the ecclesial framework that most suits it. Yours ever in Christ,

BISHOP OF SERGIEVO Administrator Diocese of Sourozh