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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](http://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,

*+ Basil*

BISHOP OF SERGIEVO  
Administrator  
Diocese of Sourozh