

2003

Petition to Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh

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Dear Vladyka, Please stay with us! Please do not retire!

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January 2003

Your Eminence Dearly Loved Vladyka,

We, clergy and laity of your diocese, are distressed by the official invitation, according to which on 1st February the Diocesan Assembly is not going to discuss the possible election of your successor, but will "consider the implications of Metropolitan Anthony's wish to retire and his desire that the Holy Synod should appoint Bishop Basil of Sergievo as the ruling bishop of the Diocese of Sourozh". In fact by this approach to the election the result of election is predetermined, which is against the statute of the Sourozh Diocese's guidelines for the election of the ruling bishop. By our statute, article 2, section 4c, the election of a ruling bishop must be the result of free will of all the members of the diocese, who have voting rights and who should be given 28 days for nominating the candidates. Nowhere in the statutes is it envisaged that the name of candidate should be predetermined. We were told of the Assembly only one month prior to it taking place and only one candidate already determined.

Bishop Basil has been our Assistant Bishop in Sourozh for almost 10 years. Being the Chairman of the Diocesan Council he is already de facto ruling the diocese. In the meanwhile we have not seen many fruits of his activities. Not a single parish was opened by him. The problems of the diocese have not been sorted out. This Diocese, which was founded by your apostolic work, and which was an example for other dioceses, has been in crisis for some time already. If Bishop Basil is capable of taking the diocese out of crises why has he not done this to date?

We were witnesses to how Bishop Basil behaved towards Bishop Hilarion and Father John Jillions. His attitude towards his brothers in Christ was far from being brotherly. The traits of his character, which were revealed to us, made us ask whether he will be able to be a true successor of yours. Besides, we do not understand how Bishop Basil can manage a diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, where the majority of the laity are Russian speaking people as he does not speak good Russian.

We are afraid that Bishop Basil may decide to move the diocese into another jurisdiction. Because he has already spoken a number of times about that change of jurisdiction, we are very alarmed. We want to remain members of the Russian Orthodox Church - Moscow Patriarchate. Until now, for many years, you were the guarantee of our faithfulness to the Russian Orthodox Church, but now we are afraid that after your retirement, those people who openly talk about moving to another jurisdiction can realise their plans.

For many years Archbishop Anatoly has been seen to be a patient servant of Christ's Church, whom we all trust and love. Unlike Bishop Basil, Archbishop Anatoly is open to people of all backgrounds and in a Spiritual way we have gained from him much more than we have from Bishop Basil. We do not understand why his nomination has not even been considered.

Dear Vladyka we ask you to stay our ruling Bishop and not retire! If you leave it will split the diocese that is already shaken by what has happened over the last year.

If, however, you are determined to retire we beg you to accept as your successor that person who will be appointed by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. We trust the hierarchy of our church and are convinced that it will elect a person worthy to continue your apostolic ministry.

Your people,

Editor's Note:

The petition above is circulating on the Internet with the following cover note: "Dear Friends in Christ, Last Sunday, Metropolitan Anthony announced his intension to resign by Easter. This petition asks him to stay with us or if he resigns to allow the Moscow Patriarchate to appoint his successor. Metropolitan Anthony is aware that this petition is being prepared. I ask for your support by signing the attached petition and returning to me by e-mail, or, by signing the petition at the Cathedral this or next Sunday. Your servants in Christ, Adrian and Tanya Dean; Lyuba Alieva".

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