



## **HOLY METROPOLIS OF VELES AND POVARDARJE NEGOTINO**

Protocol No.1001 from 13 July 2002

To  
The Holy Synod of Bishops  
of the Serbian Orthodox Church  
Belgrade

Your Holiness,

Filled with joy that God has bestowed on us the possibility to witness His name before the schismatics, pagans and antitheists, but at the same time, we are sad and aggrieved because the Church in Macedonia is being persecuted by the new Neros and Diocletians. We are writing this letter to ask for Your holy prayers and Your intercession before the Lord of glory in addition to God's comfort, given to us in abundance.

Allow us, Your Holiness, to inform You of the latest church events in Macedonia following our acceptance to enter liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC and the other Orthodox Churches, of our persecution, the denial of the basic human rights, maltreatment by the police and the threats with weapons, to the most brutal threat that we would be deprived of our life.

After an extensive propaganda and the campaigns of nearly all media in Macedonia against the act of our entering liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC, and through it with the other orthodox Churches, the Synod of the schismatic church in Macedonia held a meeting on 5 July 2002 and reached an entirely uncanonical decision to suspend us from duty of eparchial archierey of the holy Metropolis of Veles and the Povardarje. In the respective decision, which we are enclosing, it is stated that by the unilateral joining to the liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC we have violated, deranged and trod on our episcopal confession, which, allegedly, obliged us to preserve the Constitution of the schismatic church in Macedonia. Without a trial and without any given violation against any church canon, not even against a single article from the Constitution of the schismatic church, they reached an uncanonical decision, to put us into the monastery "St. George" near Negotino, where there are no basic conditions for life as there is no running and drinking water except for than two hours a day.

Just for the record, they have erred even by saying that we violated our episcopal confessions of faith, for our confession of the faith, which can be checked since it is kept in the archives, was not a plagiarism, but a personal confession of faith, as it was done long ago in the Church, and in this confession not once did we mention the MOC, therefore, we never made an oath to be faithful to the schismatic synod, but faithful to the synod of the Orthodox Church.

We have been given thirty days to return to the communion with them, which would only be possible if they returned to the communion with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church within those thirty days.

This sort of decision is non-ecclesiastical in all respects, first, because they cannot make decisions about bishops and clerics who are not in their competence, for by the act of entering liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC they ceased to have competence for that and their decisions are no longer valid to us. Second, the decision itself is uncanonical because according to the canons of the Church, no one is to make a decision to remove the appointed eparchial bishop from his cathedra without previously putting him on trial and sentencing him. This decision merely reveals the ecclesiastical, spiritual and even intellectual level of the bishops of the schismatic Church in Macedonia. But You already know this.

As you may well know, the Church in Macedonia proclaimed its autocephaly in 1967 by political means. It is the only church that came into being during the communist regimes. The politicians needed it in order to control the diaspora. Unfortunately, it has not been able to free itself from the political influence ever since. Everybody knows that the politicians, and not the Church, chose the archbishops. This was also the case with the last one, who was again unlawfully appointed by politicians. Thus, it comes to no surprise that they made a political instead of a church decision. Even those metropolitans, for whom we hoped would enter liturgical and canonical unity with the SOC, were intimidated by the political blackmails and showed that they preferred the comfort to the Church.

What is even worse is the way their decision was realized. They used police force. Despite the fact that the Church is separated from the state, since the archbishop had been appointed by the governing political set, he asked the state to perform an utterly unconstitutional act and to evict the legal episcopos from his cathedra with the use of police force. Naturally, the police did this without an injunction, which was not how things were done even after the World War II in the totalitarian system, where one had to present an injunction in order to confiscate somebody's property. On 6 July 2002, at about 12.30 noon, they came in front of the Metropolis, broke the lock, forced their way into the house, rummaged through our possessions seeking arms and searched our pockets. We were most brutally evicted by the police, having been previously humiliated and maltreated. We did not **transfer** our duty since we did not accept their illegal decision, even though the police threatened to put us in prison. We were evicted together with three brothers and a sister who lived with us.

The police took us to the monastery St. George near Negotino, but they wanted to leave only us there and the brothers and sisters to leave. They fiercely opposed it. The very next day, several brutes gathered to protest against our being at the monastery. In fact, they are exerting extreme pressure on us to depart from here. The telephone was cut off two days after our arrival. Now we have water only for two hours a day due to some restriction, we have no telephone and we rest in cells with no warm floor but bare concrete.

On 9 July 2002, the commission appointed by the schismatic synod, consisting of Metropolitans Timothy and Agathangel called the Eparchial administrative board and performed a revision at the Metropolis after having previously broken the locks and declared that there was a possibility of a financial misuse, wanting, of course, to discredit our person. They changed the episcopal deputies and assembled the clergy asking them to confirm their loyalty in written. That same day the priests who denied loyalty to them were suspended and removed from their parishes. And all of that was done with the assistance of the police.

We have hired a lawyer to press charges before the civil court for violation of the peace of our residence because we were evicted from there without a court injunction. Furthermore, we have informed the monitoring mission of the Helsinki Committee for human rights in Skopje of this case and of course, we are doing our best to alarm the public of the fact that our basic human rights have been denied.

We would not have voluntarily left our Metropolis if we weren't forced to do so. We ask you to remember us in your holy prayers, as we know you have freedom before God, to help us endure in the love towards Him.

Your brother in Christ, our Lord,

+John Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje