



**HOLY METROPOLIS OF VELES AND POVARDARJE
BITOLA 1400**

Protocol No.1006 from 28 July 2002

To
the Head of the Holy Synod of Bishops
of the Serbian Orthodox Church,
The Archbishop of Pec,
Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci and
Patriarch of Serbia kyr kyr Paul

Your Holiness,

The report about the persecution from our residence in Veles by the schismatic synod of the Church in Macedonia with the assistance of the police, who worked without an injunction, was finished by us saying that we would not have left our God-given holy Metropolis, unless we had been forced to do so. In spite of not having any basic conditions even for the life of a hermit, for the hermit fathers dwelled in places where there was enough water for staying alive, while at the monastery "St George" near Negotino we had water only for two hours a day for all the needs of nine people who were with us, we were determined to stay there since it belonged to our holy Metropolis, hoping, of course, that the just God would bring us back to our cathedra from where we had been unjustly and without a court procedure persecuted

But, a new violent incident happened, perhaps even greater and more brutal than the previous one when we had been evicted from Veles. From the very first day of our stay at the monastery St. George we were exposed to the pressures of the hoodlums who were coming daily to the monastery, insulting us and the brothers and sister who were with us, threatening that they would force us out of the monastery with the assistance of the police, who peacefully observed all of these inhuman offenses. The police were present at the monastery every day, not to protect us, but to watch what we were doing, whom we were meeting and where we were going.

We assert with full responsibility that these hoodlums were in collusion and organized by the monastery head, the archpriest Kire Ristov, who was appointed by the schismatics the day we arrived at the monastery, replacing the legal head, Slavce Ristevski, appointed to that duty by our humbleness,. The above-mentioned priest Kiro Ristov had been punished for committing several offences, so they considered him the most appropriate for a head, having in mind his desire for revenge.

On 20/7 July 2002, while we were having our vespers service with our brothers and sisters and several believers from Kavadarci and Negotino, and on the occasion when brother Marco was tonsured into a monk, several hoodlums and a dozen of elderly misled people, gathered in the monastery yard so that they would prevent us from entering our cells after the service. When we were informed of their

number during the service, frankly speaking, we were not frightened, since we, together with the believers made roughly the same figure. But, what we did not know then, was that all those vandals and mercenaries, as it later turned out, were hired by the head of the monastery with the “blessing” of the schismatic archbishop Stephen.

They pushed and shoved us out of the monastery and locked the gate. This happened about 8.00 p.m. They were insulting us with the rudest words, swearing and spitting on us. Together with our brothers and sisters and the believers who were at the vespers service, we peacefully witnessed the crucified and resurrected Christ. We hope, Your Holiness, that it would not sound hedonistic if we say that we felt nice to have been given the opportunity to witness, in this way, our faith, which is the only that saves.

Having seen that we were persistent and that we would remain in front of the monastery gate until morning, at about 2.30 a.m. they started breaking the locks of the cells where we were accommodated, throwing our personal possessions out. After a while a truck came and they started to put our things in it. Unfortunately, all of this was happening before the eyes of the police. In fact, they were present from the very beginning of the persecution, but they did not make a single move to protect us. Things went too far when they remained indifferent to the brutes’ breaking of the locks and throwing out of our belongings. It was the same as if they themselves had cooperated in the crime.

At about 4 a.m. the truck drove out of the monastery and they asked us where to unload the things, threatening they would throw them out if we did not answer. Thus, we were forced to get into the believing people’s cars, who stayed with us persistently all the time, and to go to our parents’ in Bitola where we could unload our things. We stayed, together with three brothers, in our parents’ flat which was empty, as they live in another one, while the sisters were accommodated in our parents’ weekend-house, about 12 km from Bitola. These places are too small for this number of people, but thank God we have a shelter, and glory to Him who bestowed us to witness Him to the schismatics.

In the apartment, where we live, we have adapted a room in which we now officiate. People from all parts of Macedonia come. It is certainly difficult that we don’t have places to officiate in other cities, but we hope to have them soon after Your prayers.

Your brother in Christ and co-officiator,

+John Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje