

## PATRIARCH OF MOSCOW AND ALL RUSSIA ALEKSY

28 June 2002

No. 3727

To His Holiness,  
the Most Holy Paul, Archbishop of Pec,  
Metropolitan of Belgrade and Karlovci,  
Patriarch of Serbia

Your Holiness,  
beloved in God, Brother and Co-officiator!

I cordially salute You and wish You, the brothers bishops and the God-loving Serbian people, graceful peace and greatest prosperity.

Our attention has long been drawn to the problem of the canonical organisation of the life of the Orthodox Christians in the Republic of Macedonia, presented to us in Your Holiness' letter, delivered through the most reverend bishop of Backa, Irineos. As Your Holiness knows, the Russian Orthodox Church unalterably supports the position of the Holy Serbian Church in respect to the given question considering its resolution to be entirely in the competence of the Mother-Church. Besides that, We are deeply grieved by the residing out of the ecclesiastical communion of the multitude of believers in the Republic of Macedonia, who are brotherly Slavic people. This grief is doubled by the temptations that these people undergo these days, being the target of terrorist attacks. We, in the measure of Our understanding, have followed, with attention, the process of negotiations between the representatives of the Serbian Patriarch and the bishops in Macedonia. We were pleased by the fact that, in spite of the difficulties, during the last years some meaningful steps have been made in the negotiation process, as it was noted at the Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church in May, this year. We received with pleasure, the notification that now, the Serbian Orthodox Church with prayer and love in the Holy Spirit expects the answers of the church hierarchy in Macedonia. Together with your Holiness and our brothers, the bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church, We are also convinced that the establishment of the eucharistic communion, broken after the unilateral proclamation of autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, introduces a great contribution to the work of the pan-orthodox unity and Christian testimony to the contemporary world.

According to the truthful words of the holy Apostle Paul, in the body of Christ, which is His Holy Church, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it" (1 Cor. 12.26). Thus, We feel the Lord's consolation ever since we received a notification that one of the bishops in Macedonia, the Highly Reverend Metropolitan of Veles and Povardarje John, has already joined the canonical communion and unity with Your Holiness, which is, with the Fullness of the Ecumenical Orthodoxy. From now on, We greet this brother in Christ through You and twice as much mention him in our prayers, so that he will have God's support and aid in his further actions, which should, in Our opinion, be aimed towards the full canonical communion in prayer of all believers in Macedonia and their pastors with the Ecumenical Fullness of Christ's Church. This is why, and in anticipation of the final resolution regarding the organisation of the Church in Macedonia, the ending of the long-term isolation and stepping into the brotherly family of the world Orthodoxy is already a great achievement and represents a pledge to the future prosperity which fairly needed by the beloved orthodox people of Macedonia who endured many sufferings. We hope that our mutual joy will soon reach its fullness when the other brothers of Metropolitan John will be received into the canonical

communion, and the issue about the status of the Orthodox Church in their country will be properly resolved – reasonably, grounded on love and in accordance with the holy canons.

I assure Your Holiness in Our cordial prayers for the approaching of this grandeur of the orthodoxy and for the widespread bloom of the peoples in the countries that God gave to Your Enlightening care.

With brotherly love in Christ our Saviour  
+ Aleksey,  
Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia