

that may be considered by the Holy See of Jerusalem to attend to these concerns.

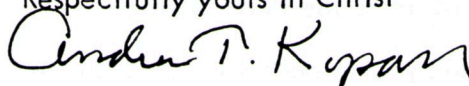
Similarly, I am sending enclosed, a disturbing article that appeared recently in The Greek American newspaper published in New York, by a Dr. Raouf Abujaber, concerning a meeting of disaffected Arab Orthodox Christians of the Patriarchate, over the sale of patriarchal property and sanctuaries. This timely article confirms what we have been reading in the American press that the Patriarchate is selling off its properties without accounting to the Holy Synod and its people for these sales, exacerbating the already troubled relations that exist between the overwhelming Arab Orthodox composition of the Church in the Holy Land and the almost exclusively Greek composition of the hierarchy and the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulchre. Reports have it that the Patriarchate does almost nothing for the spiritual needs of its Arab Orthodox flock. Certainly, this situation needs to be remedied and an equitable adjustment needs to be made between the two ethnic groups that comprise the Church in the Holy Land.

Finally, we have learned that His Beatitude, Patriarch Diodoros, has defrocked Bishop Nikiphoros. We were extremely sadden to learn this as we consider the Bishop to be an able and conscientious hierarch who is greatly troubled by the worsening conditions at the Patriarchate and is attempting to bring about corrective measures, since persuasion has apparently failed. Perhaps His Beatitude has found some of his attempts to be offensive, but we like to remind you that the history of the Church has many examples of courageous men and women who have offended their superiors in their zeal to defend the integrity of the Church. One such example that comes to mind is St. John Chrysostom, who, as Patriarch of Constantinople was banished by the Emperor because of his condemnation of Patriarch Theophilus of Alexandria's management of church funds (who had a reputation for expensive building programs and for living lavishly). Another example that comes to mind is that of St. Symeon the New Theologian. It is our request that Your Eminence use his influence with Patriarch Diodoros and the Holy Synod to restore Bishop Nikiphoros to his former position for the greater good of our Holy Church and in particular, to assure that no further erosion of our Orthodox patrimony in the Holy Land takes place.

My wife Alexandra, joins me in expressing to Your Eminence, our prayers that the Prince of Peace whose birth will shortly be observed in the Church of Nativity at Bethlehem and throughout the world, bless and keep you and the pleroma of our Church. Awaiting your response and paternal blessings, I remain

Enclosures:

Respectfully yours in Christ



Andrew T. Kopan  
Professor Emeritus and Archon  
Didaskalos tou Genous of the  
Ecumenical Patriarchate

PS: I have also enclosed some materials which may be of interest and two photographs taken on my previous visit to Jerusalem in 1981. I would appreciate it if you would identify the two hierarchs who are with Patriarch Diodoros and myself in the picture. The other picture I believe, shows you in the procession. Am I correct?



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December 5, 1994  
Feast of St. Savvas the Consecrated

Metropolitan Vassilios of Caesarea  
General Patriarchal Representative  
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem  
P.O. Box 14256, Jerusalem, Israel

Your Eminence:

Arising this morning and being the Feastday of St. Savvas, and remembering especially his magnificent monastery in the Judean wilderness during our recent trip to the Holy Land, I proceeded (as I am wont to do on feastdays), to read the life of the saint. In so doing, I learned with great surprise that his unconsumed body had been taken by the Latin Crusaders in the Middle Ages to Venice and, according to the book Orthodox Saints by Fr. George Poulos, you had gone to Venice in 1968 at the request of the late Patriarch Benedict to accompany the return of the saint's relics back to his monastery, as directed by Pope Paul VI.

It was then that I remembered that I had not responded to your letter of October 24th, for which I seek forgiveness. My delay was due to the fact that following my return from the pilgrimage I came down with a bad cold which necessitated that I take a period of rest. I am happy to be able to write today (being so reminded by reading the life of St. Savvas), and to send you enclosed a modest check as my personal contribution. As mentioned in the audience with Your Eminence (see enclosed picture), the Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL), a lay movement within the Orthodox Church in America, which seeks to activate the role of the laity and restore spiritual renewal in the Church, and under whose auspices the pilgrimage took place, at its next Board of Directors meeting in January, will consider making a contribution to the Patriarchate.

I want to thank you in behalf of OCL for the kind hospitality shown to us by Your Eminence during our recent visit to the ancient See of Jerusalem. We left ever-inspired by our experiencing the sites made holy by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A major highlight of this experience was receiving the Holy Eucharist at the midnight services in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre--the Tomb of Christ. We are indebted to our guide, Bishop Nikiphoros of Constantine, who made our pilgrimage a most memorable event.

We were quite disappointed, however, with the sad state of affairs at many of these shrines, as reflected by their deteriorating condition and in some instances by their delapidation. While we can understand that their ancient vintage makes upkeep and repairs costly, we could not understand the filth and garbage that we saw at many of these shrines. There is no excuse for uncleanness despite the shortage of personnel. Certainly, for modest cost, people can be hired to keep these places clean. This is why at the audience with Your Eminence, many of our pilgrims expressed their chagrin at this state of affairs and offered suggestions for amelioration. I trust that you were not offended as these criticisms arose from sincere concerns of faithful Orthodox Christians. In this respect, I am enclosing for your attention a copy of a memorandum that one of our pilgrims, George Matsoukas, a devoted Christian who was appalled at the conditions he saw, sent to the recent annual OCL meeting in Chicago and his recommendations for improving the situation. Please accept them as constructive alternatives