

My response to the letter of Mr. Christ Stratakis

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem

My dear Editor

In response to the letter by Mr. Christ Stratakis, "Discontent in Worldwide Orthodox Christianity – A Rebuttal", published in your Magazine (January, 199, Letters to the Editor) , I decided to write to you and to send to you some information with the hope that you may help to save our Patriarchate from it's dissolution in which it is found itself lately. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which for ages now serves the Holy Places in the Holy Land, is the greatest and most precious inheritance of Orthodoxy and the world Hellenism.

Sincerely, I do not know where to start and where to stop. You see, the situation in which we have come to be is so tragic, that it seems really unbelievable. And it is unbelievable not only because it is unacceptable even for a civic organization but because it is a Church, "the Mother Church of all Churches". How, and to whom to tell the situation that prevails here ? " Our People" do not care or are afraid to get involved in this affair, and the strangers should not learn the real situation because then the position of the Patriarchate will be precarious and nothing will be able to save it, especially in the Local environment.

As I have protested in the past, the main responsible one for the dramatic situation of the Patriarchate is Patriarch Diodoros (Karivalis), who from the day of his election uses the Patriarchate as if it was his own property.

From the day of his election he behaves towards the Brothers as if they are his slaves. For this reason , many Brothers, especially educated and with many abilities, not being able to stand his behavior, have abandoned the Brotherhood.

He never compiled and presented to the Synod an account of the income and the expenses of the Patriarchate (except once in 1985, and an incomplete one), and as a result, no one, not even he himself knows what is going on with the finances of the Patriarchate. This, of course, is done on purpose, because, this way, he could "enjoy" the ride and no body can get anywhere searching for answers. And even though there are proofs for the financial doings of Diodoros, there is no one, until now, who cares to look at them.

He withdrew from the various Banks, all the monies that were there, so that he may have enough to spend for his desires, his Villas, his cars etc.

Since 1985, he stopped paying for the health care of the brothers simply because , as he said, he had no money for that. When someone got sick he told them : "Go to your parents and when you are well, come back." This situation continues until today.

He completely showed no care for the Seminary of the Patriarchate which, when I came to Jerusalem, had about 80 boarding students. Last year it had 14 students, when the year started, later 13, 7 students in the last three classes of the High school and 1 in the

first three classes, of whom 5 are Greeks from Albania and it is not certain they will stay even until they finish school. This year there are only 9 boarding students.

As a result of this situation the number of the members of the Brotherhood is reduced to dangerous level and there are many unfilled positions everywhere, in the services of the Patriarchate, in the Holy Shrines and our Monasteries.

What is worst than others is that, because of the indifference of the Patriarch and due to the lack of capable brothers, the Patriarchate has been isolated from the rest of the world and, while the whole world is in turmoil, we are like in a coma, unable to respond the challenges of the times. The Vatican is in daily contact with Israel and is claiming victories while we are losing ground and influence.

The rights of the Patriarchate are infringed upon and there is no one to do something about it. Even worse, the Patriarch, in order not to spend anything from the moneys of the Patriarchate, allowed the Roman Catholics to decorate the dome of the Holy Sepulchre and to replace the Cross on the small dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and, as I heard lately, to repair the Bell Tower of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, I do not know exactly to what extend.

In order that he may have enough money to spend, Patriarch Diodoros, leases daily, properties of the Patriarchate to third parties for development, with agreements which he deals by himself, with the assistance of "his people", who, of course, are rewarded in many ways for their "cooperation" and discretion.

Unfortunately, while all these are widely and well know to everyone around, nobody is willing to tackle the problem and help for the correction of the situation.

I could go on and on, but there is no end to this. I think, the only way for some one who is interested to be informed about this invaluable and with unique importance inheritance of the Orthodox and in particular the Greek Orthodox world is to come and see in person and to find for himself the truth about the situation. I do would like to invite you to come, even for a few days, and you will understand that what I am writing to you is only the tip of the iceberg threatening to crush our Patriarchate.

Definitely, I will be at your disposal for anything else which could help you understand the tragic situation in which the Patriarchate is in, with the hope that maybe you can help to save it from destruction, but also to repair the damage caused to the Greek name and more so the Christian name, in the area, due to the behavior of Patriarch Diodoros and his "entourage".

Friendly yours

+ Bishop Nikiphoros of Constantine

March, 1999.