



Communiqué N° 18-06 of the Council of the Archdiocese Meeting of 18 October 2006

The Council of the Archdiocese met on 18 October 2006, with His Eminence Archbishop Gabriel in the chair. Among the questions addressed were:

1. *Relations with the Patriarchate of Moscow.*
 - a) The Council of the Archdiocese studied the minutes of the meeting of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Moscow on 6 October 2006. It took note of the proposition put forward by the Moscow Patriarchate to try to tackle the problems that have arisen over several years between the Exarchate and the Moscow Patriarchate, within the framework of discussions between the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Constantinople (Minute 104:3). The Council was pleased about this initiative, since a distressing situation has been created here for all who experience here these divisions with pain and bitterness. The Council also hopes that a discussion between those responsible in the two Patriarchates – taking account of different aspects presented by the situation – would allow for a reduction in tension and the re-establishment of peace, with respect for the ecclesiological and canonical norms of the Orthodox Tradition.
 - b) Concerning the canonical situation of His Grace Bishop Basil of Amphipolis and the various other clergy mentioned in Minute 104 of the meeting of the Holy Synod of Russia on 6 October 2006, where it is said that ‘some clergy were received into the Exarchate without their having been asked for letters of release from their hierarchical and canonical authority’, i.e. by the Russian Orthodox Church, the Council of the Archdiocese, likewise heard a series of detailed comments whose content can be found as an appendix on the website of the Exarchate (<http://www.exarchat.org/spip.php?article654>).
 - c) The Council of the Archdiocese also judged it was necessary to observe that, contrary to what is said in the note contained in Minute 104:
 - His Eminence Archbishop Gabriel was not ‘appointed head of the Exarchate’ (as one can read in the note) but, like all his predecessors at the head of the Exarchate, was elected by a free and conciliar choice of the Archdiocesan General Assembly at its meeting of 1 May 2003, in conformity with the regulations of the 1917 – 18 Council of Moscow and with the statutes of the Archdiocese. His election was subsequently confirmed by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Throne.
 - The ‘direction of the Exarchate’ has on no occasion and in no way abandoned – nor is it abandoning – the spiritual heritage of Metropolitan Evlogii and of those who succeeded him in the work of building up the Church in Western Europe. It is precisely in fidelity to their teaching, and in conformity with Orthodox ecclesiology, which is based on the territorial aspect of the Church as manifest in one place, that the Archdiocese calls earnestly for the creation of a Church that is locally and geographically one, like that which was proposed in 1949 in particular by Metropolitan Vladimir and the members of the General Assembly of the Archdiocese, and has been confirmed on numerous subsequent occasions, notably by the late Archbishop Serge: ‘Our existence under the *omophor* of the Ecumenical Patriarch for seventy years and our taking root in Western Europe in

the course of these long decades has created a situation which is altogether new [by comparison with the time of Metropolitan Evlogii]. It can no longer be a question simply of a return by our Archdiocese [...] beneath the *omophor* of the Patriarch of Moscow. We have to seek together, in a spirit of mutual understanding and love, the ways towards a global solution of the problem of the Orthodox diaspora in the West.’

2. *Episcopal Vicariate of the British Isles:*

His Eminence Archbishop Gabriel will chair the annual conference of the Vicariate which will take place on Saturday 18 November in London, on the theme, ‘Finding our Freedom in Christ’, with two talks on the programme: ‘Our Future – the Local Church’ by Archbishop Gabriel, and ‘Continuity and Change – the Vicariate in the Context of Orthodoxy in Western Europe’ by Bishop Basil.

3. *Parishes*

- The community of Stavanger (Norway) was recognised as a parish. They now have a resident priest, and liturgical celebrations in Slavonic take place regularly each week (Vigil and Liturgy at weekends and also Great Feasts).
- At Antwerp (Belgium), on 5 November, Archbishop Gabriel will preside at the celebration for the dedication of the new church of the Dutch-speaking parish of the Holy and Great Martyr George.
- An enquiry in process by a working group led by Archpriest Alexis Struve will soon publish its findings on the rectors of parishes in order to allow a better framework for the structure and life of the parishes of the Archdiocese.

4. *Commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the death of Metropolitan Evlogii*

The commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the death of Metropolitan Evlogii took place on Saturday 7 October alongside the diocesan conference chaired by Archbishop Gabriel at the St Sergius Institute. A detailed account has been written and published[. Other meetings will take place, notably Sunday 12 November at the House of ACER in Paris, with a talk by Madame Tatiana Victoroff on ‘Metropolitan Evlogii and ACER’

5. *Catechism for new immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe:*

The formation course put in place by the diocese in Paris will resume in the second week of November. The catechetical team, which has been given into the care of Archpriest Wladimir Yagello, is organised into three separate groups, which meet in premises belonging to the parish of Our Lady of the Sign, the parish of the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple, and the St Sergius Institute (see posters for the days, times and ways of enrolling). A catechetical course of the same type, led by Archpriest George Ashkov, has also been set up by the parish of St Nicholas (Nice), meeting once a month.

6. *Meeting of rectors and parish wardens from Paris and the surrounding area:*

A meeting for the exchange of views and information concerning problems of administration, law and property, as well as the general situation of the Archdiocese, will take place with the rectors and parish wardens of Paris and the surrounding area on 2 December at rue Daru. A meeting of the same kind already took place in February 2005.