



ARCHEVÊCHE DES EGLISES ORTHODOXES RUSSES
EN EUROPE OCCIDENTALE

EXARCHAT DU PATRIARCHE ECUMENIQUE

ARCHEVÊQUE GABRIEL
EXARQUE du PATRIARCAT ECUMENIQUE

ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL
EXARCH OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH

Paris 20th February 2010

Dear fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ,

Subsequent to Bishop Basil's own request to retire which, as you know from my letter to you of the 5th October 2009, was granted to him he has, earlier this year, asked me to approach His All Holiness Bartholomew I on his behalf and request laicisation as it became clear to him that for his own well being he needs a family home and a chance to marry again. I have to inform you that the Holy Synod took the decision last week to return Bishop Basil to lay status.

Speaking for myself, I wish to express here before all of you my gratitude for all that our brother in Christ, with whom I have worked during these recent years, has done for the good of our Exarchate. May I ask you not to condemn him? I understand full well that some among the faithful are unhappy and even furious, but we must not forget the words of the Saviour: "Judge not, that you be not judged" Someone has written to me the following: 'Metropolitan Anthony taught us only to look at the person, not how he behaves'. We recognise that Bishop Basil has devoted a very large part of his life to the Church, both as priest and as bishop. The past few years have been hard and his burden been onerous. We did not understand that he was near collapse and exhausted.

The lesson for us is clear: we must carry one another in our hearts, for it is God who has given us each other, like a precious gift. We could not see, and I include myself, that a brother in Christ had fallen under the weight of the cross we laid upon him. Let each one of us examine our conscience and purify our soul, so that we are able to accept this decision. We have lost a bishop, that is true, but we still have a brother to love and support.

May God bless you!

+Archbishop Gabriel of Comana
Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch

