

« You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen »

(Mark 16.6)

« Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. »

(Matthew 28.19)

Manifesto for the restoration of the Orthodox Church of the Gauls

In order to proclaim the Good News of the risen Christ, to teach and baptise in the Name of the Holy Trinity, to *“persevere in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers”* (Acts 2:42), we intend to participate in the restoration of the Western Orthodox Church, and more specifically in that of the Orthodox Church of the Gauls in its institutions, its spirituality and in its uses, in particular in its liturgical uses, most notably in the use of the local rite, called the *“Rite of the Gauls”*, because, as Saint Gregory the Great says: *“Wherever the unity of faith reigns, different liturgical uses cannot be harmful to the church.”*

(1)

Our activity is located at present in the French-speaking world and we are directly carrying on the work undertaken by Bishop Jean Kovalevsky and his brother Maxime; this work was sanctioned by Metropolitan Sergius of Moscow in 1936, and was blessed and presided over by St. John of San Francisco from 1959 until his death, and we count ourselves among their spiritual heirs.(2)

Our spiritual line of descent is the one we received from the tradition of the Saints of Provence, the martyrs of the Gauls, from our Father Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, from the Fathers of Gallican monasticism: Saint Martin, Saint John Cassian and the Fathers of Lérins: Saint Honoratus, Saint Vincent, Saint Caesarius.... the holy Fathers of the Jura: Saint Romanus, Saint Lupus..., the Irish missionaries: Saint Columbanus, Saint Gall..., the missionaries of Belgium: Saint Amand, Saint Servais, Saint Lambert..., without forgetting the Father of the monks of the West, Saint Benedict of Nursia and all the others...

We confess the primitive faith of the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431). By this confession we take as our spiritual reference point the so-called *“Oriental”* Orthodox Churches, rejecting any charges of *“monophysitism”* which have been wrongfully linked to this confession.

We are happy to accept all the definitions of the four further Ecumenical Councils, believing in particular that the Christological formulations of Chalcedon explicitly render the doctrine of the Undivided Church complete.

We also accept the Councils of Constantinople of 1341 and 1351 which confirm the teaching of Saint Gregory Palamas on the Divine Light and the Uncreated Energies, as well as the whole doctrine and practice of Hesychasm.

While we accept the true theology of the holy councils named above, we reject all the unjust condemnations of people(3) which may have been pronounced in the fiery heat of human passions. We state that there are no fundamental differences of faith between the Orthodox Churches in spite of the misunderstanding of the Council of Chalcedon. For us, the unity of the Orthodox Church is defined by its common faith and not by jurisdictions, institutions. Thus we are, in effect, in communion with the Orthodox Churches.

Following the example of the Undivided Church, our faith does not primarily mean adhering intellectually to truths to be believed, but experiencing the mysteries which the Church confesses. At the heart of everything and above all there is Someone: the active Presence of the paschal Christ, dead and risen, Who gives life, energises and gives meaning to every aspect of our daily lives. This means clearly affirming the primacy of the spiritual, the concrete practice of a Way of transformation and access of the heart (body-soul-spirit) to reality. We recognise our own position completely in this powerful assertion by Father Alexander Schmemmann: “The first Christians did not provide any programme, any theory, but wherever they went the seed of the Kingdom germinated, the flame started to burn, their whole being was a living torch of praise for the risen Christ; He and He alone was the sole happiness of their life, and the Church had no other aim than to make present in the world and in history the Joy of the Risen Christ, in whom all things have their beginning and their end. Without proclaiming this Joy, Christianity is incomprehensible!”(4) We wish to be the witnesses to this reality at the heart of human distress in a world searching for God, going as far as loving our enemies according to Christ’s commandment.

Not out of moral laxity, nor out of spirit of relativism, nor in order to proselytise, but out of obedience to Christ who said: “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.” (Mt 15:32) (5), we welcome into Eucharist Communion all Christians who have been baptised into Christ in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the liturgical calendar, we follow the Gregorian Calendar, because we are a Western Church living in the midst of Christians who, for the greater part, follow this calendar. (6) However, we support the proposals of the Aleppo Consultation of 1997, which was convened under the auspices of the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, and we shall accept, when the day comes, the new calendar to be decided by common consent by these Churches.

In conclusion, we make our own the declaration by Bishop Kallistos Ware: “Neither an Ecumenical Council, nor the Patriarchate of Constantinople or of Moscow, nor any other Mother-Church can create a new local Church. The most that they can do is to recognise such a Church. But the act of creation must be carried out in situ, locally, by the living Eucharistic cells which are called to gradually make up the body of a new local Church.” (SOP 302, Nov. 2005, given at the St. Serge Institute of Theology in Paris). This is even more so since it is not a new local Church which is being created here, but the restoration of an ancient local Church, faithful to the spirit of the Undivided Church, poor, mystical and ecumenical.



1. Saint Gregory the Great, Ep I, 43 (PL 77, 497C)
2. This work was also encouraged and blessed on several accounts by the Patriarchs Athenagoras of Constantinople, Justinian and Justin of Romania.
3. such as those of Saint Dioscorus or Saint Severus of Antioch.
4. Alexander Schmemmann, For the Life of the World, Ed. Desclée
5. (see also Mt. 26: 28 and Lc 11:9-13)
6. (following the example of the Orthodox Church of Finland which depends on the Ecumenical Patriarchate)