Dear Fr.Gregory,
Accept my genuine congratulations on your wonderful 40th year service in the St.Sergius church.
Our paths in life crossed more than 40 years ago, when we both studied at Holy Trinity Seminary and were students of the same year's class. At the time, you were already an experienced Deacon and I, a young postulant.
Even at that time, you had foreshadowed qualities, which made you what you are. I noticed how easily and naturally you became close to people that were totally unfamiliar to you: and people reaching out to you.
As a result, upon your acceptance of the grace of Priesthood, the gift of genuine concern for people and gift of prayer blossomed increasingly in your soul, and made you an outstanding pastor of our Church. You saved non-believers and brought them to Christ. Being attentive to people individually and unnoticeable to others, you sought out misfortunes, sore points and attempted to help. And nearly always you were successful.
In 1982, our class finished the Seminary course and shortly after, you were ordained and appointed to serve in the St.Sergius church.
It was a blessed period in the life of the Church Abroad. At Her head stood Metropolitan Saint Philaret of New York. At that time, quite recently in November 1981, the glorification of Russian New Martyrs and Confessors took place. And thus your first Service on the day of the Royal Martyrs on the 17th July 1982, was the first Service held in their honour. In the same year of 1982, the Myrrh-Streaming Iveron Mother of God Icon appeared, which over the ensuing 15 years blessed and enlightened the flock of the Church Abroad.
However, the clouds slowly condensed. One after another, the spiritual people – pillars of the Church Abroad, slowly departed and the Church began to diminish spiritually. Finally came the complete fall, and the Church Abroad disavowed Her path.
At the time, many priests did not agree verbally with what the Synod did: but how few of those found inner spiritual strength to act according to their conscience. It's not easy to rupture associations with people close to you, with Archbishops and with other priests that they conducted Services. But fidelity and purity of conscience is valued above all else. You with Vladika Andronik became the exemplars of loyalty to the true Orthodox Church, and strengthened many on this path.
Dear Batushka, Father Gregory! On this bright day of your jubilee, allow me to wish you God's help in your service to the Holy Church, and many-many years of living in good health.
Many years!

Bishop Andrei

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