

Clarifying the Record

A Brief Summary

In the past twenty years there has been misinformation disseminated from various persons and entities about the Holy Orthodox Church in North America and Holy Transfiguration Monastery. We have never denied access to any inquiring minds for those who have asked for it. We sympathize with those who have been misled or misinformed and we forgive those who have misled and/or misinformed others either in knowledge or in ignorance.

ROCOR has followed the course as predicted twenty years ago by some of HOCNA's clergy, monastics, and laity: It has entered into communion with the Moscow Patriarchate and World Orthodoxy even though the issues of Sergianism and Ecumenism have not been resolved. This has caused controversy and turmoil in ROCOR through May of 2007.

The allegations against Holy Transfiguration Monastery and Fr. Panteleimon were nothing more than hearsay by the ROCOR bishop's in their attempt to discredit the motives of the clergy and faithful who left ROCOR in 1986 for matters of faith. Some of these allegations were accepted by others because they did not sympathize with HOCNA's course of action, i.e. not participating in the Ecumenical movement, while others sympathized with HOCNA by protesting verbally and/or in writing but chose not to leave their bishops.

Today HOCNA is not only stable but in fact is growing despite the problems it encountered with ROCOR, the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece, attempts to discredit certain clergy as well as perceived isolationism. Since leaving ROCOR, some parishes along with their clergy have more than tripled in size and several new monastic communities have been established. Clergy and faithful around the world, who have grave concerns for the inroads of the heresy of Ecumenism, have sought refuge with HOCNA's bishops.

Time tells all things. We pray for and forgive those who have had ill will towards us and pray for the repentance and return to Orthodoxy of the ancient and venerable Patriarchates and Local Orthodox Churches. Also we pray for full canonical communion and con-celebration with those clergy and faithful who have left ROCOR because of the betrayal of their bishops. Furthermore we pray we will establish full canonical communion and con-celebration with the synods of bishops in Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Russia with whom we share the same confession of faith, but are currently apart due administrative issues.

If questions remain to clarify the record such as the availability of documentation, or other concerns, please contact HOCNA at:

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- Metropolitan Makarios at <metmakarios@homt.ca>
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- Bishop Sergios at " <abbot@gsinai.com>
- Bishop Demetrios at <bpdemetrius@homb.org>
- [HOCNA Metropolis of Boston](#)
- [St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery](#)
- [Holy Transfiguration Monastery](#)

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Part I

The Indecisiveness of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia on Ecumenism

Fr. Alexis Young's Letter

In the 1960's, 1970's, and early 1980's the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) received many clergy, monastics, and laity from other Orthodox Churches. These clergymen were very concerned about their Patriarch's, bishop's, and prominent clergy's involvement in the Ecumenical Movement. Under the presidency of Metropolitan Philaret of New York, these clergy were usually received without the customary canonical release from their former bishops because they were leaving their former bishops because of heretical teaching.¹

During these three decades, Metropolitan Philaret released many encyclicals very critical of ecumenistic activities and humbly called the other Local Orthodox Churches to reconsider their course. The most notable of these were his letters to Patriarch Athenegoras of Constantinople and Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America and his two "Sorrowful Epistles."²

The following is a commendatory letter Bishop Gregory Grabbe, who was secretary of ROCOR for 52 years, wrote to Fr. Panteleimon concerning a letter Fr. Panteleimon wrote to Rev. Eric Inglesbury in early 1983.

[Bishop Gregory's commendatory letter](#)

Fr. Panteleimon wrote a letter to Rev. (Mr.) Eric Inglesbury, a man in England who thought that (ROCOR) was inconsistent in their way of dealing with Ecumenism, on March 17/30, 1983. This was written before ROCOR made a firm statement later on in the same year about Ecumenism and how they would henceforth govern their relationship with Churches involved with Ecumenism.

¹For an explanation on how Holy Transfiguration Monastery and other clergy were accepted into ROCOR see [Documents Pertaining to the Acceptance of Clergy Protesting Ecumenism into ROCOR](#) .

² For the texts of these encyclicals see [St. Philaret's Sorrowful Epistles](#).

In "Rev. Eric's" letter, which was published in the *Orthodox Christian Witness* on October 3/16, 1983 page seven, Fr. Panteleimon wrote:

"We are not blind, Eric, nor do we close our eyes to what is happening around us. We see the "handwriting on the wall" and we take note...It would not, therefore, be surprising if there would be some among us who will follow in the great apostasy and falling away. No one can be sure till the end, even concerning himself...This should convince you that if we in any way thought the Holy Faith had been betrayed by the Synod, we would not hesitate to leave...Furthermore, it would be much easier to make such a move today, if it were necessary, than it was 15 years ago, for then we left other jurisdictions individually in utter poverty, alone, destitute, even with debts...God forbid that this Holy Faith should ever be betrayed by any one of us. Should this ever happen, we assure you that there will be again those to rise up and separate themselves from the betrayers, and they shall not be few..."

[Complete text of the letter to Eric Inglesbury](#)

Later in 1983 Metropolitan Philaret asked the fathers of Holy Transfiguration Monastery to compose three versions of an Anathema Against Ecumenism to be considered by the entire Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. The bishops selected the preferred text and all signed it at the Bishop's sobor they held in Mansonville, Canada in 1983.³

Fr. Alexi Young wrote a letter to Father Panteleimon in late 1985 complaining about what he perceived as the low level of spirituality in most ROCOR parishes. Fr. Panteleimon wrote back the following reply in February of 1986:

This then, Father, is the reason we are in the Synod, --because grace abides in the Synod, because Truth is found in the Synod. It is not for pietistic reasons, or for cultural and ethnic reasons that we came to the Synod, but rather because of the Faith. We do not, therefore, "hold up the Russian Church Abroad as some kind of real standard of piety and spirituality", as you mentioned in your letter, but rather we uphold our Synod primarily and foremost as a standard of Orthodoxy. All others have betrayed the Truth. This was the point that I made in my letter to Mr. Inglesby of England. No matter how much the others give lip service to Orthodoxy and claim that through Ecumenism they are projecting Orthodoxy, they have all espoused the Branch Theory in practice, and by being organic members of the WCC and proponents of Ecumenism they have renounced the unity and uniqueness of the One, Holy, Catholic, and

³ The text of the anathema is as follows: [Text of the 1983 Anathema Against Ecumenism.pdf](#)

Apostolic Church. When they recognize priesthood, and baptism, and communion in those separated from the Church, then they have already renounced the Church. For some time now, this Branch Theory understanding has become part and parcel of their ecclesiology. If anyone dare to say what the Church teaches, that is, that there is no baptism, priesthood and eucharist outside the Church, they look upon you as some kind of sectarian and heretic. That just isn't nice to say to people. It is downright uncharitable to tell them that they have no priesthood and baptism. According to Metropolitan Meliton of Constantinople, it is "luciferic pride" to say this.

[Complete text of the letter to Fr. Panteleimon to Fr. Alexis Young, February, 1986](#)

On line seven of the above paragraph which is found on page nine of the letter Fr. Panteleimon wrote to Fr. Alexis in February of 1986, Fr. Panteleimon makes reference to the above letter he wrote to Rev. (Mr.) Eric Inglesbury on March 17/30, 1983. This reference is very important for putting Fr. Panteleimon's words in context, especially since the letter to Mr. Inglesbury was written before ROCOR made a firm statement later on in the year 1983 about Ecumenism and how they would henceforth govern their relationship with Churches involved with Ecumenism.

Later, Fr. Alexis Young in his history of the ROCOR, quotes this letter Fr. Panteliemon wrote to him in February of 1986. Fr. Alexis writes, "9 months before the schism; Fr. Panteleimon had this to say about the ROCOR:

"The Synod Church [the ROCOR] is a real standard of Orthodoxy.... Therefore, discerning where the Truth is found, we remain in unity under our bishops in the midst of many trials...because grace abides in the Synod... We uphold our Synod primarily and foremostly as a standard of Orthodoxy. All others have betrayed the Truth. This was demonstrated of late by the election of our new Metropolitan (Vitaly)..."

The preceding excerpt was widely publicized by the bishops of ROCOR. However, it is important to see this quote within context. Fr. Panteleimon, and the clergy with him, was well aware of the spectrum that existed in ROCOR. They hoped that Metropolitan Vitaly would clarify and enforce the Anathema Against Ecumenism. However, the same clergy were very clear from the beginning that if they ever came to the conclusion that ROCOR had compromised their stance against Ecumenism, they would not hesitate to find other bishops whom they could trust as rightly dividing the word of Truth of the Orthodox Faith. Because the hierarchy of ROCOR did not really apply the Anathema Against Ecumenism in practice, and furthermore did not clarify their stance when some bishops ignored the Anathema by concelebrating with Orthodox Churches deeply involved with the Ecumenical Movement by making a

public disavowal, the clergy that were to become HOCNA saw no reason to continue in ROCOR.

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Fr. Panteleimon's Retirement and ROCOR's Changing Position on Ecumenism

In October of 1986 the Brotherhood of Holy Transfiguration Monastery elected Fr. Isaac abbot after accepting the requested retirement of Archimandrite Panteleimon. Metropolitan Vitaly, who was in Australia at the time, gave his blessing by phone for the election to take place making no stipulations of Fr. Isaac not being eligible to be a candidate. The following letter was written by Monk Ephraim after Bishop Hilarion told him that Fr. Isaac could not be elected abbot:

[Letter of Monk Ephraim, October 1986](#)

In November of 1986, at Metropolitan Vitaly's request, the clergy wrote the following letter expressing grave concern that hierarchs and prominent clergy in ROCOR were not abiding by the Anathema Against Ecumenism that all the bishops of ROCOR had signed in 1983. An increase of con-celebrations at the hierarchal level had been noted after the repose of Metropolitan Philaret of New York and the retirement of Bishop Gregory Grabbe.

[Letter of the New England Clergy, November 1986](#)

In December of 1986, Monk Ephraim, on behalf of the four hieromonks, four hierodeacons and 27 monks who comprised the brotherhood of Holy Transfiguration Monastery, wrote the following letter to Metropolitan Vitaly:

[Letter of Monk Ephraim, December 1986](#)

Within 30 days after Monk Ephraim's departure letter, Holy Nativity Convent and 22 parish clergy along with their parishes left ROCOR in solidarity with Holy Transfiguration Monastery.

[Archive of letters written by clergy leaving ROCOR in 1986](#)

Within 60 days of Monk Ephraim's December '86 letter, all of the concerns of the departed clergy, monastics, and laity were confirmed by Metropolitan Vitaly's *1986 Nativity Epistle*. Metropolitan Vitaly redefined how ROCOR was to understand and apply the Anathema Against Ecumenism of 1983 as stated in the

above-mentioned Epistle, to which the monastery made a [sorrowful reply](#).

For a very brief explanation of ROCOR's changing interpretation of the [1983 Anathema Against Ecumenism](#) , and finally the revision of its text, see the following:

[Complete text of the Anathema Against Ecumenism of 1983](#)

[Revision of the Text of the 1983 Anathema Against Ecumenism](#)

ROCOR tried to claim that the departure of these clergy, monastics, and laity was for personal reasons----to prevent an investigation of various accusations against the monastery in Boston. However, the charges against the monastery----which had been petitioning for a canonical investigation and trial for eleven months----were handled in complete violation of canonical order. Furthermore, the charges against the monastery would have hardly precipitated such a mass exodus from ROCOR if there had not been valid doctrinal causes. This is clearly demonstrated by the subsequent departure of the French Mission (see [Letters of the French Mission](#)) as well as additional clergy of ROCOR (see [Letter of Fr. Seraphim Johnson](#)), who departed for the same reasons of faith in the following year, 1987, after waiting in vain to see any change of direction in ROCOR.

Conclusions

After the repose of Metropolitan Philaret of blessed memory and the retirement of Bishop Gregory Grabbe, ROCOR changed. The Clergy, monastics, and laity that formed HOCNA left ROCOR in 1986-87 because the ROCOR bishops under the leadership of Metropolitan Vitaly, refused to take the Anathema Against Ecumenism (AAE) of 1983 seriously. While acknowledging that there had been a wide spectrum of how to deal with the problem of ecumenism in ROCOR, the AAE was a watershed that clarified how ROCOR was to interact with Orthodox Churches involved in Ecumenism. Instead, without Metropolitan Philaret's leadership, the ROCOR bishop's increased their contact with ecumenical Orthodox Churches, especially at the hierarchal level. In retrospect, after Metropolitan Vitaly's *1986 Nativity Epistle*, the choice was obvious: Accept the changed interpretation of the AAE or seek the rightly divided word of Truth of the Orthodox Faith with other bishops.

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Part II

Unsubstantiated Allegations

Justice in the Church of God

Those who read the Lives of the Saints know that, in the history of the Church, there have been many occasions in which defamation and false accusations have been used as a stratagem to calumniate prominent church leaders. From a worldly point of view, these tactics were very successful. It is necessary to mention only one example out of the many: Saint John Chrysostom, the most illustrious bishop ever to adorn the throne of Constantinople, died in forlorn and cruel exile in the remote mountains of Armenia — all because of the malice of a group of disgruntled bishops and clergy, backed by imperial power.

As Christians, we know that there can be no true justice in this world, and that is one of the reasons why we put all our trust in the living God, Who knows the hearts of men. Nevertheless, in her experience, the Church has established a comprehensive system of justice in order to protect her spiritual leaders and her flock as much as possible from injustice and malice.

Specifically, the holy canons serve as a check on those who would stoop to unscrupulous and unlawful means to hurt others. When a clergyman is accused of some misdemeanor, for example, the first requirement is that his accusers must present their complaint to the proper ecclesiastical authorities so that they might form a spiritual court and begin an examination. Should the clergyman's accuser or accusers fail to do this, and instead begin a whisper campaign of accusations, innuendo and slander, this immediately places the accuser's motive under serious question. Why is he using this devious and unlawful method? Is it to prejudice the case against the accused? Is it to deprive the accused of an opportunity to defend oneself in any effective manner? Or is it to have the accused defamed and condemned without the accuser having to come under scrutiny himself? Perhaps he is using this tactic because he knows that Orthodox Christian clergy and monastics are not permitted by the holy canons to take others to secular courts of law — thus, the accuser knows that he can attack his defenseless victim with impunity. In any case, even secular courts do not countenance such tactics. A judge will call a mistrial, for example, if he feels that the jury has been influenced by the news reports of a sensation-seeking media.

So too, in the Church, the proper channels must be followed and if they are not, this alone is sufficient cause to call a mistrial and to "throw the case out."

Should the accuser follow the proper course of action, then the holy canons say that his own character and motives must first be examined. In fact, the canons specify that improper accusers and witnesses must not be admitted — that is, those who are not of good repute, not Orthodox Christians, not of unimpeachable character, or avowed enemies of the accused, or who have perjured themselves, or whose testimony is contradictory.

So gossip, hearsay, and "media blitzes" may be effective as far as the world is concerned, but they are not effective as far as God is concerned. "My ways are not as your ways." (Is 55:8)

There may not be true justice in the world, but the ultimate verdict is the word our Saviour Himself has pronounced: "The tree is known by its fruit." (Lk 6:44) *This* is the trial and the test through which all of us must pass to gain the crown of immortal life. This is the verdict and the justice that prevails in the Church of God.

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The Opinions of ROCOR's Senior Bishops on the Allegations made Against Holy Transfiguration Monastery

ROCOR's senior Bishop, Gregory Grabbe as well as their secretary for over 50 years was highly critical of the way the allegations against Archimandrite Panteleimon and Holy Transfiguration Monastery were handled as outlined in the letters below.

[Letter of Bishop Gregory to Vassily Ivanovitch, 1987](#)

[Excerpt from a Letter of Bishop Gregory Grabbe to Metropolitan Vitaly, 1994](#)

The complete text of his letter is below.

[English](#)

[Russian](#)

Archbishop Seraphim of Chicago wrote to a parishioner of St. Nectarios Orthodox Church a letter defending Fr. Panteleimon in 1987.

[Letter of Archbishop Seraphim, 1987](#)

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Scandals in the Church

[SCOBA Statement on Sexual Misconduct in the Church](#)

[On the Moral Law of God](#)

For further reading on how the Orthodox Church has traditionally dealt with scandal, real or imagined, HOCNA has the following documents on its official HOMB site:

[Part 1: What do the Saints Say?](#)

[Part 2: Edifying Narrations](#)

[Part 3: More Edifying Narrations](#)

Conclusions

The accusations against Holy Transfiguration Monastery were received from witnesses that cannot make accusations against a clergyman according to the sacred canons of the Orthodox Church. Due process was not even remotely followed. The motives of the ROCOR bishops become highly suspect in the face of this fact.

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Part III

Relations with the True Orthodox Christians of Greece

A Clarification Written by the Clergy of Greek Descent in ROCOR

HOCNA clergy had written a statement called *A Clarification* in the late 1970's that was highly critical of Archbishop Auxentios and his synod. However, the membership of Archbishop Auxentios' Holy Synod had changed dramatically in the time that had elapsed since the statement was composed and 1987.

[Introduction and text of A Clarification](#)

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Allegations Against Archbishop Auxentios

Archbishop Auxentios of TOC was never canonically deposed, to whom the clergy of HOCNA turned after Metropolitans Akakios and Gabriel separated and could no longer provide for the North American clergy they had received in December of 1986. Priest Seraphim Johnson, who was still in ROCOR at the time, wrote what many considered a fair and sober analysis of why the HOCNA clergy were correct to turn to Archbishop Auxentios. The following documents speak for themselves:

[Fr. Seraphim Johnson on Metropolitans Akakios and Gabriel](#)

[Letter of Fr. Basil to Metropolitan Kallinikos](#)

[On the "Deposition" of Archbishop Auxentios"](#)

[Original documents from the Lamian Synod on the lifting of the Deposition](#)

Furthermore, a renowned Archimandrite of Athens, belonging to the jurisdiction of Archbishop Chrysostom Kioussis II, and probably the most active and energetic of his clergyman today, in his recent book about the history of TOC, praises Archbishop Auxentios and says that he was harshly judged by the bishop-judges since they were raging in soul. He also reports that on September 18, 1998 their Synod unanimously, after petition of many clerics and laymen, lifted the defrocking. "However, he adds, the ever-memorable Archbishop Auxentios, in the conscience of the great majority of the flock of TOC, never ceased for a moment to be the sweet and worthy spiritual father and Shepherd" (Archimandrite Euthymius Bardakas, O Dromos ton Orthodoxon [*The Way of the Orthodox*], Athens 2005, p. 11).

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The Separation of the HOCNA Bishops from Archbishop Maximos

In 1994 , when Archbishop Auxentios of blessed memory reposed there were only two bishops in Greece that remained in his Synod, Metropolitan Maximos of Cephalonia and Bishop Athanasios of Larissa. The other four Bishops that had remained with Archbishop Auxentios had reposed. Metropolitan Maximos of Kephalaria was elected Archbishop by default since Bishop Athanasios did not come to the Synod meeting. Later, Metropolitan Maximos consecrated three individuals to the episcopacy without the consent of the Hierarchs in North America, Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto, and Bishop Moses of Roslindale or the Hierarchs in France, Metropolitan Photius and Bishop Philaret. His concelebrant in these uncanonical consecrations was a defrocked priest, Demetrius Beefis, of the Alexandrian Patriarchate posing as a bishop. The Bishops called Archbishop Maximos to Spiritual Court, and after he had ignored the three summonses specified by the Sacred Canons to answer to his peers for his actions, he was deposed and Metropolitan Makarios of Toronto was made Locum Tenens of the throne of Athens.

The Diocese of Boston was established as The Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Boston (HOMB) in 1988 and the diocese of Toronto was established as The Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Toronto (HOMT) in 1991. Later, the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Seattle was established in 2002. In 2007 the see of the diocese of the Western United States was transferred from Seattle to Portland, Oregon and became the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Portland. Seattle (St. Nectarios) is a stavropegic parish under the Omophorion of Metropolitan Ephraim of HOMB.

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The Attempted Unification with the Bishops of the Lamian Synod

From 1999 to 2001 there was an attempted effort at reunification with a group of Bishops that had separated from Archbishop Chrysostom Kiousis II of Athens and formed a new synod under Metropolitan Athanasios of Lamia. The Lamian Synod approached the Metropolitans of HOCNA with a desire for dialogue and reconciliation. The full union was not accomplished for two major reasons: First, the bishops in Greece claimed that they had the “right” to judge and approve the consecrations of Metropolitans Ephraim and Makarios and Bishop Moses, who had never broken communion with their canonical first hierarch Auxentios. Although the Bishops in America rejoiced that these bishops had admitted and repented of their uncanonical acts against Archbishop Auxentios, they questioned why the bishops accepted the canonicity of the bishops who had remained with Archbishop Auxentios who had reposed (Bishop Theognost, Metropolitan Gerasimus of Thebes and Boetia, and Metropoltan Germanos of Aiolia) and not those who were still alive. These Bishops publicly stated that Metropolitan Maximos’s illegal ordinations of the previous year were indeed “uncanonical...which he performed contrary to the will of the bishops with whom he was in communion...” Secondly, the bishops in Greece wished to have the right to establish parishes and monastic communities wherever they wished in North America since it was “missionary territory” regardless of it being in the dioceses of their brother bishops, which, of course, was unacceptable from a canonical and practical point of view.

[The official correspondence between the Bishops of HOCNA and the Lamian Synod](#)

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HOCNA Does not Consider itself the Last Remnant of the Orthodox Church

HOCNA does not teach that there is absolutely no sacramental grace in other Orthodox jurisdictions. What HOCNA confesses is that there is heresy and schism in various Orthodox Churches that participate in Ecumenism. HOCNA refrains from all communion in prayer and mysteries with those Churches.

[Declaration of the Clergy](#)

[Statement of March, 2003](#)

[Letter of Metropolitan Ephraim to Clergy in Ukraine](#)

It's important to note that HOCNA regards its separation from other Traditional Orthodox Churches that have the same confession of faith as purely administrative. This includes but is not limited to the various "Old Calendar" Synods in Greece, the "Old Calendar" Synods in Romania and Bulgaria, and the various "True Orthodox" and "Catacomb" Synods in Russia.

Conclusions

The Ecclesiastical climate in Greece and Russia is very complex and unstable due to human frailty and misunderstandings. Nevertheless, most of these Churches are striving to be Orthodox.

HOCNA is administratively separate from the Traditional Orthodox Christians in Greece by choice but since we share the same confession of faith, spanning the gulf of our differences is possible. The primary dispute is "perceived" canonical irregularities in episcopal consecrations and also disagreement on how to interact with the faithful of the Orthodox Churches enmeshed in Ecumenism and other innovations. (Gordian's Knot will only be untied with God's grace!)

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Part IV Isolationism

The Perception of Isolationism

It is perceived by some individuals that HOCNA seeks isolationism. HOCNA doesn't have a formal public relations or media department although it has a wide distribution of publications, incense and icons. So the question is: Does HOCNA seek isolationism. The answer is no.

All HOCNA parishes and monastic communities are open to all visitors for services, bookstore and gift shop purchases as well as visitor tours. Currently HOCNA has parishes in eleven countries of which four of those countries have very active monastic communities.

For more information on the location of HOCNA parishes, monastic communities, publications, gifts and more, please visit the following websites:

- [HOCNA Metropolis of Boston](#)
- [About Us](#) provided by Ss Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, where Metropolitan Moses serves. Parish listing on the same page.
- [St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery](#)
- [Holy Transfiguration Monastery](#)
- [Holy Nativity Convent](#)
- [Convent of the Meeting of the Lord](#)
- [Holy Theotokos Convent](#)
- [St. Nectarios Press](#)

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