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2 July 2007

Mr. Eliot Spitzer, Governor of the State of New York

Albany, N.Y.

Dear Governor,

Seventy-seven years ago, after fleeing Communist persecution in the Soviet Union and finding peaceful refuge in the United States, Russian Orthodox monks built Holy Trinity Monastery in the beautiful countryside of Jordanville, New York. This monastery has become known worldwide as a spiritual center for the millions of faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from five continents have visited the monastery, which is renowned for its beautiful Russian Byzantine architecture, centering on the Cathedral.

The monastery also serves as the residence of His Eminence, Metropolitan Laurus, the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, while Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary, a degree-granting theological institution, welcomes students from around the world. Just down the road is the Convent of St. Elizabeth, the home of Russian Orthodox nuns. Many of the devout laity have also settled in the area. The recently deceased great cellist and conductor, Mstislav Rostropovich, owned an estate nearby, while the son of the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich has a house in the village.


Now, alas, this unique religious setting, devoted to the greater glory of God and so conducive to prayer and quiet contemplation in the great monastic tradition, is about to be devastated by a monstrous so-called "wind farm" with 68 turbines each 40-stories high. The serenity that the monks and pilgrims have long sought will be gone, literally gone with the wind! Why has there been no thought or consideration given by State authorities or by Iberdola, the state-subsidized wind-farm developer and conglomerate based in far-off Madrid, to the needs and rights of the monastic community?

How can such an appalling situation exist? It exists because no one in authority seems to care, however sensitive the issues. Last week the local town boards in Warren and Stark in Herkimer County met in closed sessions to rubber-stamp approval of the project. There was no public input. It was not allowed.

Although New York State itself is remiss in having no standards or guidelines involving industrial wind-turbine installations, I ask that the State move now to halt this desecration of the countryside around Holy Trinity Monastery, Cathedral and Seminary. To allow this shameful project to go forward as planned will cause scandal and protests from many concerned Orthodox Christians all over the world.

Please, I pray, intercede now. As exiles from Soviet Communism, the Russian Orthodox faithful sought refuge in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in the 1920s and 30s and then moved to safety and serenity in the United States and Jordanville. If Holy Trinity Monastery, with its Cathedral and Seminary, are to go the way of the wind, where do we go next with any certainty? I write these words as a monk and brother of the monastery, having spent 17 years of my life within its serene and salutary environs.

Sincerely yours,


Archbishop Hilarion of Sydney, Australia & New Zealand