

The Holy Synod in Resistance Takes Part in The Celebration of The Feast of The Holy Hierarch and Confessor of Romania, Saint Glicherie

by Bishop Klemes of Gardikion

An unforgettable visit by representatives from Greece of the Holy Synod in Resistance with our Sister Old Calendar Church in Romania took place, by the Grace of God, on the Feast of St. Glicherie the Confessor, to the increase of our spiritual familiarity with one another and a deepening of the mystery of our blessed unity.

His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Synod, on behalf of our ailing spiritual Father, Metropolitan Cyprian, led a group of some thirteen individuals, including Their Graces, Bishops Ambrose of Methone and Klemes of Gardikion; a hieromonk and a monk with the rank of subdeacon from the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Phyle, Greece; three nuns from three of our convents in Attica; as well as six lay people (three men and three women) from among our spiritual children, including the President of the St. Philaret the Merciful Orthodox Women's Guild.

The group departed for Bucharest from Athens just before noon on Friday, June 13, 2009 (Old Style). In Bucharest, they were met by His Grace, Bishop Flavian of Ilfov and a number of his monastics from the Holy Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos in the Military District of Bucharest. The visitors were then taken by automobile to the Holy Convent of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Valea Roşie, about two hours distant from the Romanian capital.



At this recently-established convent, which is under the spiritual oversight of Bishop Flavian, the visitors were warmly greeted by the Abbess, Mother Teodosia, and the seventy-five members of her sisterhood. In the main Church, Bishop Cyprian addressed some spiritual counsels about the Cross of the monastic estate to the sisterhood. Following the afternoon meal in the refectory, there was a spiritual discussion with Bishop Flavian and a tour of the various parts of the convent.

Continuing by automobile, the group returned to Bucharest to the *Metochion* (Dependency) of the Holy Synod, dedicated to St. Niphon, Patriarch of Constantinople. Later in the evening, they departed, again by air, from the airport in Bucharest for Suceava, in northern Romania, in the Province of Moldavia. On this flight, the group was joined by Archimandrite Alexis, Abbot of the Monastery of St. Edward the Martyr in Brookwood, England, who had just arrived from London. Because of a sudden bout of poor weather, the flight was delayed, but eventually the group arrived at its destination, a hotel in Fălticeni, a city nearby to Suceava.

On the morning of Saturday, June 14 (Old Style), the group of pilgrims grew by yet one more, with the addition of Mother Alexandra, Abbess of the Convent of St. John of San Francisco in Odessa, Ukraine, who had come to Romania as a representative of His Eminence, Metropolitan Agafangel of our Sister Church, the Russian Or-



thodox Church Abroad, whose intention it was to be in attendance with one of his Bishops—an intention thwarted by a delay in the issuance of their visas.

Just before midday, the group arrived at the newly-constructed Old Calendar Church



of Sts. Constantine and Helen, in the city of Fălticeni, which is of impressive size and superbly adorned within and without. The Rector of the Church, Protopresbyter Vasile Sidu, with his wife, Presbyteria Veronica, their daughters, and their grandchildren had a sumptuous *agape* meal ready for the guests, in the nearby Church hall, after they had seen the Church. The hospitality of our Romanian brethren is indeed incomparable!

In the early afternoon, the group went to visit the ancient Monastery of the Transfiguration in Slatina, built by Prince Stephen the Great (fifteenth century), which has been restored to accommodate a sisterhood and which belongs to the Romanian Patriarchate. In the monastery Church, the visitors had the privilege of venerating a fragment of the skull of St. Gregory the Theologian, which was given to the monastery at the time of its Consecration in 1550.



In the village of Slatina, birthplace of the Chief Hierarchy of the Old Calendar Church of Romania, His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie, the pilgrims visited the newly-constructed Old Calendar Church of the Prophet Elias.

From there, the group moved on to the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior

in Slătioara, headquarters of the Old Calendar Church of Romania, where they were to take part in the Festal Services in honor of the Holy Hierarch Glicherie († June 15, 1985; glorified as a Saint on June 15, 1999 [Old Style]), whose fragrant Reliquary is kept in its main Church.



At 6:00 p.m., the open-air Service of Great Vespers began, presided over by Metropolitan Vlasie, with all of the Romanian Hierarchs in attendance: Bishops Demosten of Neamț, Ghenadie of Bacău, Sofronie of Suceava, Teodosie of Brașov, Iosif of Botoșani, Flavian of Ilfoy, Antonie of Ploiești, Glicherie of Iași, Dionisie of Galați, and Evloghie of Sibiu. Also present were His Eminence, Archbishop Andronik of Ottawa and North America, from the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Together with the three Bishops from Greece, the total number of Bishops reached fifteen. On the dais, all were vested with the *mandyas*, *epitrachelion*, small *omophorion*, episcopal staff, and mitre, in accordance with the local *Typikon*, which in this instance is similar to Slavic usage. As well, scores of priests and deacons took part, while a twenty-member Byzantine choir, conducted by the Reverend Father Andrei, chanted with special beauty. The crowds of faithful present, as usual, filled the courtyard of the monastery, which was almost impenetrable.



Three or more hours into this prayerful Vigil, in which the Resurrectional hymns were harmoniously combined with those in honor of St. Glicherie, the visitors were invited to partake of a light supper. They then returned, amid torrential rain, to their lodgings in Fălticeni.

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On the morning of Sunday, June 15 (Old Style), the pilgrims from Greece arrived at the monastery in Slătioara by 7:30 a.m. for the Festival Divine Liturgy. They were welcomed by Metropolitan Vlasie and all of the Romanian Hierarchs, along with the clergy.



The Reliquary of St. Glicherie had been brought out to the open-air courtyard of the monastery for the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, in which fifteen Hierarchs took part, together with some one hundred priests and deacons, numerous subdeacons, and a large crowd of faithful.

At the end of the Festal Liturgy, Metropolitan Vlasie and Bishop Cyprian delivered homilies and Archbishop Andronik offered greetings. There followed a procession around the main Church with the Relics of St. Glicherie, after which an abundant celebratory meal was served.

The Romanian Hierarchs and the three Bishops from Greece then adjourned for an informal synodal consultation on an ecclesiastical topic of common interest, in a spirit of mutual respect and peace. The Hierarchs and faithful from Greece then visited the humble cell of St. Glicherie (beside the main Church), which exuded Grace and benediction.



Metropolitan Vlasie also accompanied the group to the large new Cathedral that is under construction, outside the precincts of the monastery, after which they returned to Fălticeni. In the evening, they were regaled by Father Vasilie and his blessed family with a meal in the Parish hall of the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen.

On Monday, June 16, the delegation from Greece visited the Convent of the Life-Giving Spring in Brădăţel, where Bishop Demosten resides and serves as spiritual Father. Some eighty nuns live in the convent, under the guidance of Mother Ierusalima. After visiting the old



Church, where Bishop Cyprian gave a brief talk, the group was shown the Church of the Great Martyr Demetrios, presently under construction, and was then served a meal, at which Metropolitan Vlasie and Archbishop Andronik were also present. Later on, Bishop Sofronie arrived at the convent. Bishop Demosten, now eighty-two years old, but dynamic and spry, received us in his cell and offered us refreshments, all the while entertaining us with his charming stories.



The visitors next went to the Convent of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in the village of Păiseni, where some thirty nuns live, under the direction of their Abbess, Mother Minodora. The spiritual Father



of the convent, Bishop Ghenadie, was present, and the visitors were given a very warm welcome. After Bishop Cyprian had offered some spiritual counsels to the sisterhood in the main Church, the group was treated to a plentiful meal in the convent refectory, during which a choir of nuns chanted beautiful spiritual songs. The reverence, respect, and love of the convent sisterhood for Metropolitan Cyprian, our spiritual Father, was very noticeable.

Thereafter, despite the pouring rain, the group went to the Convent of St. Nicholas in Dombru, fairly close to the city of Târgu-Neamț. A historic institution, it was the first Old Calendar convent to be erected in Romania, in 1930, in the wake of the calendar innovation of 1924. Having undergone repeated persecutions and even destruction, it was preserved, during the Communist era, by a miracle, through the prayers and fasting of the sisterhood. The Abbess of the convent for many years until her repose in 2004 was Mother Serafima, a valiant soul full of Grace and power, with a strict monastic conscience and a boundless love for Divine worship, which she regarded as the unquestionable priority before every other activity in the convent. At the same time, she diligently cultivated the inner life and, having the gift of unceasing prayer, instructed all of the nuns in the practice thereof.



Today, this beautiful, restored, and flourishing convent numbers forty-four nuns—for the most part young, as is the case in the other convents—under their Abbess, Mother Teoctista. The spiritual Father of the convent is a hieromonk from Slătioara, from where a priest comes to serve the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and Feast Days. The visitors from Greece visited the large new Church of St. Panteleimon and the old Church of St. Nicolas and were treated to an *agape* meal, after which they returned to Fălțiceni.

On Tuesday, June 17 (Old Style), the sixteen-member group of pilgrims, together with Metropolitan Vlasie, Archbishop Andronik, and Bishop Demosten, went to the distant parish of the Holy Fathers of the First Œcumenical Synod in the region of Vatra Dornei and to the neighboring Monastery of the Venerable Forerunner, which is under construction. Bishop Iosif resides there as the Superior of a small monastic brotherhood.



Vatra Dornei is the paternal home of the late Bishop Cosma (Lostun, † 2002), where he passed the final years of his life in isolation. His tomb, too, is situated next to the Church under construction. In the handsomely-appointed refectory, Bishop Demosten, Metropolitan Vlasie, and Bishop Cyprian exchanged messages full of love and spiritual wisdom. The Mayor of the area was present, as were also relatives of the deceased Bishop Cosma, who readily gave their consent both to the preservation of the ecclesiastical character of the place and to its development as a monastery.



On the way back, the group visited the Monastery of Voroneţ, well known from important events in the history of Moldavia, where they venerated the tomb of its founder, St. Daniel the Hesychast (fifteenth





century), and were given a tour of the interior and the exterior of its renowned main Church.

On Wednesday, June 18 (Old Style), the pilgrims from Greece visited the Monastery of the Holy Great Martyr Menas which is under construction in Roșiori. The Monastery is located on a hillside near the main artery that links southern and northern Romania, in the county of Suceava. They were given a



warm welcome by the energetic Abbot, Archimandrite Varnava, and his small brotherhood. Metropolitan Vlasiu joined them for the meal that was provided, and a choir of the Fathers and Brothers chanted hymns and spiritual songs.



The group then visited the Convent of Văratec (Romanian Patriarchate), the most populous in the world (with seven hundred nuns!), where they venerated the tomb and the Relics of its founder, St. Joseph († 1828) and admired its physical beauty.

From there, they went to the famed and historic Skete of the Nativity of the Venerable Fore-runner in Sichla, amid the beautiful Carpathian forests. In the wooden Church of the Skete, they venerated portions of the Relics of many Saints. Near the Skete, they walked up a special path to the cave of St.



Theodora of Sichla (seventeenth-eighteenth centuries). An important ascetic and miracle-working local Saint, her Relics are now housed in the Kiev Caves Lavra, where she is known as St. Theodora of the Carpathians. The chapel, the spring of Holy Water in a rock, and the cave in which she reposed form an awe-inspiring shrine, which arouses deep compunction in the soul of every God-loving pilgrim.



By way of a magnificent trail that passes through hills rich in foliage, the group arrived at the well-known and historic Monastery of the Venerable Forerunner in Secu (Romanian Patriarchate), where they venerated portions of the Relics of many Saints and also the complete Relic of a local Saint and brother of the monastery, St. Barlaam, Metropolitan of Moldavia († 1653), who was distinguished for his liturgical,



educational, publishing, and anti-heretical endeavors. They also venerated a wonder-working Icon of the Mother of God.

From there, the visitors went to the Old Calendar Convent of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Moișă, which numbers forty nuns, under the direction of their Abbess, Mother Alexandra and which has Bishop Ghenadie as its spiritual Father. In the main Church, Bishop Cyprian made some opportune spiritual remarks about the benefit



of labor in the monastic way of life, and the visitors were then treated to an abundant meal. Thereafter, they headed for the adjacent forest, in which the original building of the convent is located. Within this makeshift edifice, where three of the founding members of the sisterhood resided in secret for many years, there is also a chapel. Metropolitan Cyprian used to rest in this place during his visits to Romania, and it was he who asked the sisterhood to preserve it for historical purposes.

In the evening, the delegation from Greece enjoyed a farewell meal in the Parish Hall of the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen. They were joined by Metropolitan Vlasie, who gave a speech, as did Bishops Cyprian and Klemes.

In his remarks, Metropolitan Vlasie acknowledged that the progress of the Old Calendar Church in Romania is due to Metropolitan Cyprian. He was the instrument of God who truly saved them from wholesale catastrophe at the hands of the Communists in the 1980s. His persistent and self-sacrificial presence and his multifarious support and assistance forced the authorities to change tactics, since they did not want the West to hear that there was religious persecution in Romania. For this reason, the Metropolitan concluded, "We owe you unceasing gratitude."

Early in the morning of Thursday, June 19 (Old Style), the visitors travelled by air from Suceava to Bucharest. They were conveyed from the airport to the Skete of St. John of San Francisco in Cernica (a village near Bucharest), which was celebrating its Patronal Feast. The Skete, which is a convent under the direction of Mother Chipriana and has Bishop Flavi-



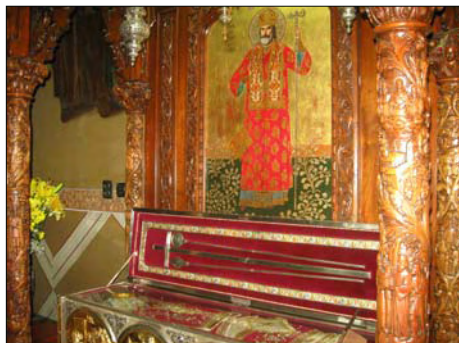


an as its spiritual Father, is being constructed under the supervision of Hierodeacon Teoctist. At the Festal Divine Liturgy, which had already commenced by the time the group arrived, Bishop Flavian concelebrated with Bishop Dionisie and many hieromonks and hierodeacons. Bishops Cyprian, Ambrose, and Klemes

stood in prayerful attendance in the Altar, and at the Dismissal Bishop Klemes was invited to deliver a sermon before the large crowd of faithful.

There followed a festal meal in the large hall underneath the new Church, in which the clergy and the congregation took part. During the course of the meal, Bishop Cyprian addressed words of spiritual counsel to those present.

On their way back to Bucharest, the visitors stopped at the historic Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Cernica, where the Relics of St. Calinic of Cernica († April 11, 1868), a great Romanian Saint and Wonder-worker, are kept, as is also the skull of St. George of Cernica († 1806), a disciple of the illustrious Elder, St. Paissy (Velichkovsky) of Neamț († 1794).



Upon their return to Bucharest, they rested for a short while at the Dormition Monastery, where its founder, Bishop Flavian, resides. The Abbot of the monastery is Archimandrite Eftimie, one of his disciples, and the brotherhood numbers dozens of monks. Late in the afternoon, the visitors returned by air from Bucharest to Athens, where they arrived safely in the evening.



• This most recent pilgrimage to the holy places of Romania was most edifying and beneficial and proved to be a source of blessing both at a personal and at an ecclesiastical level. For this reason, we offer humble and heartfelt thanks to our Lord and God, the Bestower of gifts. Amen. □

