

## **Hierodeacon Photii Tonsured to the Great Schema**

At the Vespers Service for the Feast of St. Gregory Palamas, the second Sunday of Great Lent, 2013, Hierodeacon Photii, a brother of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, was tonsured to the Great Schema by Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the Monastery. Schemamonk Father Cyprian acted as his sponsor. Father Photii is the son of Father Yakov Ferens, pastor of the Exarchate's parish of St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. John of Kronstadt in San Diego, CA, and his wife, Presbytera Agnieszka. Father Photii, one of the younger members of the brotherhood, is distinguished by his spiritual sobriety and maturity and by his humility, constantly positive compartment, and spirit of obedience.

Among the new Schemamonk's daily obediences, aside from serving at most weekday Liturgies, are his duties in the monastery kitchen, where he works with the other Fathers, not only in preparing monastic meals, but food for the some eighteen non-Orthodox elderly, ill, or needy persons in the Etna community whom the monastery and the nearby Convent of St. Elizabeth (with aid from the tiny parish of Sts. Cyprian and Justina) provide meals, delivered to their homes three times a week. Father Photii fulfills this duty with particular tirelessness. Having been reared speaking Russian and Polish, and fluent in English, as well, he also assists Archbishop Chrysostomos in his scholarly work, helping to translate Slavic texts and materials when needed.

Hierodeacon Photii graduated from Grossmont College, in El Cajon, CA. Having transferred to the University of California at San Diego, to continue his education, he made a pilgrimage to the



St. Gregory Palamas Monastery before beginning his first semester of study. Rather than return to school, he insisted on being received into the monastery, where he completed his novitiate and was tonsured a monk and subsequently ordained to the Diaconate. He was awarded the Diploma in Orthodox Theological Studies by the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies in 2011.