

Visit to the Holy Virgin Protection Convent

FROM THE *Apodosis* of Pascha through the Friday after the Feast of the Ascension, His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photiki, and Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, were guests of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary Convent in Bluffton, Alberta, Canada. They were accompanied on their visit to the convent by Mother Elizabeth, Abbess of the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess, in Etna, CA, and Nun Kypriane. A full cycle of services and the Divine Liturgy were celebrated daily by Father Akakios during the visit, and on the Feast of the Ascension the visiting Bishops celebrated a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. The accomplished convent choir sang the responses in Slavonic, English, and Greek, lending a pan-Orthodox flavor to the Feast.

The Protection Sisterhood, numbering seven nuns, is under the capable direction of its Abbess, Mother Ambrosia (*see below*),



who has, over the past few years, rebuilt and refurbished this historical monastic community. The convent was originally established in the 1930s by Archbishop Ioasaph (1888 - 1955), who founded many parish communities and two monastic houses under the aegis

of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA). The log Church built by Archbishop Ioasaph still stands before a cemetery (*see below*) in which many of the luminaries of the ROCA are buried, including Bishop Sava of Edmonton, who was a heroic supporter of monasticism and Orthodox traditionalism, constantly exhorting the faithful and clergy to overcome the moral and spiritual decline of contemporary



society. Also buried in the cemetery is Schema-nun Theodora, Abbess Ambrosia's revered biological mother, who reposed at the convent.

Mother Ambrosia—a former concert pianist and music instructor—and her sisterhood, after refusing to accept the recent reunification of the ROCA and the Moscow Patriarchate, on the grounds that the latter body has not shed the legacy of its communist connections, appealed earlier this year to be received into the American Exarchate of our Church. At tremendous personal cost, and facing possible eviction from the convent property (the ownership of which is in dispute), Mother Ambrosia and her nuns have sought spiritual refuge in our jurisdiction, reckoning it canonically proper to turn to us, by virtue of our status as a former Sister Church of the ROCA. In a short time, these jurisdictional ties have blossomed into a close spiritual relationship. (*See, below, the monastic complex renovated and rebuilt by the nuns and the visiting Hierarchs and Archimandrite Akakios on the Feast of the Ascension.*) □

