

Visit to Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, and Greece

The Czech Republic. With the blessing of Metropolitan Cyprian, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna and Bishop Auxentios of Photiki recently visited the Czech Republic and the faithful there who belong to our Church, as well as our Sister Churches in Romania and Bulgaria. They were *en route* to Greece to attend, in conjunction with the celebration of the Feast Day of our Mother House, the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, in Fili (Athens), the annual meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops. On September 4, 2006 (Old Style), they were met at the Prague train station by two of our Czech clergy, Monk Gorazd, who teaches at the Department of Orthodox Studies in the Hussite Faculty of Theology at the Charles University (where he received his doctorate), Father Jeremias Cvak, pastor of the small parish of St. Mary Magdalene and St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco, in Trest, and Jiří Ján, a doctoral candidate in theology at the Charles University, together with a small group of the growing number of traditionalist Orthodox believers in the city of Prague. (His Eminence and His Grace were unfortunately unable to visit our Synod's small mission in Prešov, Slovakia, which is dedicated to St. Xenia of Russia and served by Father Vladimir Mohorita).



On September 4 and 5, the Bishops visited a number of the faithful, as well as sites in the magnificent city of Prague, including its historical Churches. At the Gothic Cathedral of St. Vitus († *circa* 303), founded in the tenth century and rebuilt twice (*see above*), they ven-

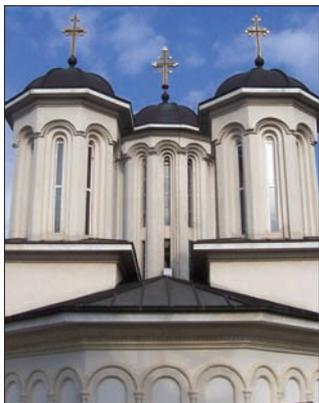
erated the Relics of St. Ludmila († 921) and the Martyr-King Wenceslaus († 935), pre-Schism Saints revered by the Czech people (*see below*). They also visited the Charles University (founded in 1348),



where they were greeted by a colleague of Father Dr. Gorazd (*see below, at left*), who delivered a short lecture about the history of the university's three faculties of theology (Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Hussite) in what is the oldest hall of the university (*see below, at right*). The exemplary piety, warm hospitality, and profound kindness



of our Czech faithful (see a dinner gathering at the home of one believer, *at left*) had a lasting and extraordinary effect on the visiting Bishops, as they departed Prague, on the morning of September 6, for an overnight trip by train to the Romanian capital of Bucharest, the next destination on their long journey.

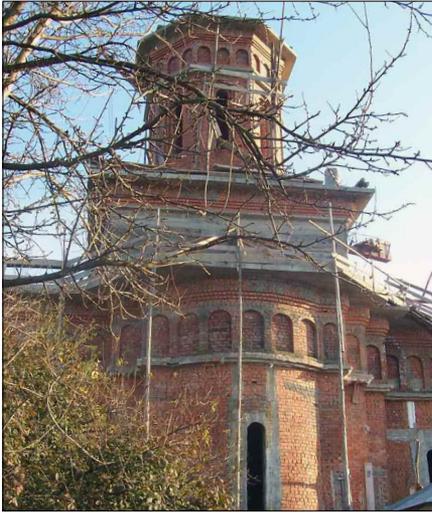


Romania. In Bucharest, by the kind blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie, First Hierarch of the Old Calendar Church of Romania, and Bishop Flavian of Ilfov, Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentios were guests of the Monastery of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* (see the monastery Chapel domes *at left*), which Bishop Flavian serves as Abbot. Together with His Grace, Bishop Flavian, they concelebrated the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, September 11, in the monastery's immense and beautiful Cathedral Church, in the presence of a huge



crowd of believers.

His Eminence and His Grace also visited the Convent of the Annunciation, in Valea Roșie, the Abbess of which—Mother Teodosia (*below, at right*)—is spiritual mother to more than seventy nuns. They were received at the convent in the traditional Romanian manner, with flowers and warm greetings, and were afterwards served a delicious lunch. (*See below, at left*, the new convent Church, which is under construction.) The Bishops later visited the Skete of St. John of Shanghai



and San Francisco, in Cernica, with thirteen nuns, whose spiritual Father is the much-loved Hierodeacon Father Teoctist.

In this sisterhood, as well, a new Church, in traditional Romanian style, is under construction.

During their stay in Bucharest, the Bishops were visited by a number of Romanian friends whom Archbishop Chrysostomos met during his time as a Fulbright Scholar in Romania and, later, as Executive Director of the U.S. Fulbright Commission in that country. Among these were Ioana Ieronim, the well-known Romanian poet and writer; her brother, Mihai Moroiu, Director of the American Program at the U.S. Fulbright Commission; Mrs. Manuela Brusalis, Director of the Romanian Program at the Fulbright Commission; Professor Augustin Ioan, one of the country's leading architects, and his wife, Dr. Simona Ioan, recently-appointed Romanian Ambassador to Senegal; Professor Remus Rus, a well-known theologian and professor at the Patriarchal Faculty of Theology at the University of Bucharest; Dr. Aurelian Marinescu, one of the directors of the Patriarchal Press in Bucharest, and his wife, Dr. Haritina Marinescu; Dr. Manuil Morgâz-an, nephew of Metropolitan Vlasie and a Lecturer in Law at the University of Iași, along with his wife, Victoria; and Silvia Colfescu, Director of Editura Vreamea, the Bucharest publishing house that has published some five books by Archbishop Chrysostomos, two of them

translated into Romanian by Professor Rus.

The Bishops departed Bucharest for Sofia filled with vivid memories of the inimitable hospitality and kindness of their hosts at the Dormition Monastery and the amiable exchanges with their visitors.

Bulgaria. On the Eve of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, His Eminence and His Grace arrived in Sofia, Bulgaria, where they were the guests of His Eminence, Bishop Photii, First Hierarch of the Old Calendar Church of Bulgaria. They stayed at the beautiful Episcopal residence, where His Eminence and three monks observe a strict monastic rule. The Bishops were joined, on September 21, by a delegation of pilgrims from the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery and the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess, including the Abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Akakios, and Monk Chrysostomos, and, from the convent, Mother Synkletike and Sisters Evpraxia, Myrtidiotissa,



and Glykeria. The visiting nuns were hosted by the large Pokrov Convent, near Sofia, where the more than fifty-five nuns and ten novices or postulants, all spiritual daughters of the late Abbess Seraphima (former Princess Olga Lieven), showered them with warm attention and sororal Christian affection. The hospitality accorded to the nuns was similarly extended to the visiting Bishops and monks on Thursday, September 22, when they were treated to a very elegant luncheon. (*At left*, see the photo-

graph of Bishop Photii and Archbishop Chrysostomos, both *at the far left*, arriving by car at the convent. Before lunch, the latter gave a short talk to the nuns on the meaning of obedience and spiritual unity in the monastic life (*see at right*).

During their trip to the Pokrov Convent, which is in a magnificent physical setting, on a hill with trees and a mountain stream, the Hierarchs also visited the grave of the blessed Abbess, Mother Seraphima, where His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photiki served a moving *Trisagion*, or memorial service for the re-



posed. (See, *below, at left, left to right*, Bishop Photii, Archbishop Chrysostomos, Bishop Auxentios, and, kneeling, *left to right*, Archimandrite Akakios and Monk Chrysostomos, at the grave of Abbess Seraphima. *At right*, His Eminence, Bishop Photii and His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, walking in the beautiful convent grounds).



The graciousness of the Pokrov Sisterhood was matched only by the wonderful fraternal treatment shown to the visiting Bishops and monastics by His Eminence, Bishop Photii and his elect brotherhood. His Eminence, who was, before becoming a monk, an assistant professor at the University of Sofia (where he completed his studies in Classics and theology), shared many of his thoughts and his intellectual and spiritual wisdom with his visitors, thus enriching them not only in spirit but also in mind. Such erudite and spiritually enlightened individuals are a wonderful and rare asset in traditional Orthodoxy, today.

His Grace, Bishop Auxentios and Archimandrite Akakios concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with His Eminence, Bishop Photii on the Feast of St. Euphrosyne and St. Paphnoutios, Sunday, September 25 (Old Style), at the Cathedral of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* in Sofia, which was filled to capacity with the faithful. The accomplished and splendid Cathedral choir enhanced the spiritual beauty of the Divine Liturgy. His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos, who was unable to concelebrate with the clergy on account of ill health, nonetheless Communed with them, thus participating in the unifying Mystery of the Holy Eucharist. At the end of the Liturgy, he also delivered a sermon on the importance of the contemporary witness of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church in Bulgaria, emphasizing the importance of maintaining its spirit of oneness and spiritual unanimity. After the Liturgy, a magnificent meal was served to the visitors at the Rose Hotel, in the resort town of Bankja, near Sofia, which is owned and

operated by spiritual children of Bishop Photii. (See the Divine Liturgy, *below, from top right, counter-clockwise*: Altar servers receive Bishop Photii; Small Entrance [Bishop Photii, Bishop Auxentios, Altar servers, and clergy]; Holy Communion; sermon.)



The following day, the American pilgrims departed Sofia by train for Greece, stopping for one day and night in Thessaloniki, where they were greeted by Archimandrite Glykerios, who serves the parish of St. John the Merciful, and where they visited a number of the city's historical Churches, including the Metropolitan Cathedral, in which are found the Relics of St. Gregory Palamas. The nuns were the guests of the historical Old Calendarist parish of the Holy Twelve Apostles in Kymina, just outside Thessaloniki. The pilgrims then continued on to Athens, where the Bishops and Fathers were the guests of our Mother House in Fili and the visiting nuns were the guests of the Convent of the Holy Angels, where the Abbess of the Etna Convent, Mother Elizabeth, served her novitiate. The spiritual atmosphere at both of these monastic oases accented the hospitality shown to the visitors (in fact, distant members of the two institutions)—an atmosphere reminiscent of the ancient monastic desert.

Greece. The annual Feast Day of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina was celebrated this year on Sunday, October 2, (Old Style). Small Vespers, a procession from the monastery cloister to the new monastery Church with the Relics of the Saints, and Great Vespers having taken place on the eve of the Feast (Saturday, October 1), Matins and the Divine Liturgy were celebrated with great splendor in the temporary Chapel in the basement of the new Church. Participating in the services, in addition to His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, President of the Holy Synod and First Hierarch of our Church, was our entire Synod of Bishops (His Eminence, Bishop Chrysostomos of Sydney and New South Wales [Australia], His Eminence, Bishop Michael of Nora [Sardinia], Their Graces, Bishop Ambrose of Methone and Bishop Chrysostomos of Christianoupolis [Assistants to the Metropolitan], His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis [Synodal Exarch in Sweden], His Eminence, Bishop Silouan of Luni [Italy], and from the United States, His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos and His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photiki); His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie, First Hierarch of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Romania, together with Their Graces, Bishop Demosten, Bishop Ghenadie, Bishop Flavian, and Bishop Teodosie; and His Eminence, Bishop Photii of Triaditza, First Hierarch of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. His Eminence, Bishop George, who serves the Orthodox faithful of South Ossetia, was unable to attend the Feast Day services because of serious ill health.

Among the several thousand who made pilgrimages to the monastery during the weekend festal period were clergy and believers from throughout Greece and from Bulgaria, Romania, Sweden, America, and Italy, lending a particularly festive and "catholic" atmosphere to this year's observance of the monastery's Feast Day. This atmosphere was heightened by the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by the Hier-

archs, seventeen Priests, and four Deacons in a number of different languages (Greek, Romanian, Slavonic, Italian, Swedish, and English), accompanied by the beautiful chanting of the monastery's outstanding Byzantine choir. At the reception and *trapeza* (monastic meal) following the Divine Liturgy, at which a number of political dignitaries and public officials were present, sincere and warm wishes were conveyed to Metropolitan Cyprian and the monastery on the occasion of the Feast.

On the Sunday following the monastery Feast Day, October 9, at the Novotel Convention Hall in downtown Athens, a beautiful and moving tribute was held in honor of Metropolitan Cyprian's Name-day. (*See photograph below.*) The two-hour program, in the packed hall, filled with a huge throng of faithful, included a program of Byzantine hymns, chanted by the monastery choir; traditional Greek folk music, performed by the "Kleronomia" folk orchestra; a moving presentation by the Very Reverend Archimandrite Cyprian, Secretary of the Holy Synod, entitled "The Central Place of the *Gerontas* [Elder] in the Sanctification of His Disciple" (which will appear in a subsequent issue of *Orthodox Tradition*); the presentation of a magnificent Icon to Metropolitan Cyprian, picturing St. Symeon the New Theologian as a layman (his name was George), surrounded by Uncreated Light coming down from Christ through his spiritual Father, St. Symeon the Studite; a moving note of gratitude from Metropolitan Cyprian; a short greeting from Archbishop Chrysostomos, thanking Metropolitan Cyprian "for your love," for "your blessing to continue our work in America," and for being "a true *Gerontas* for us," to which statement the audience reacted with tumultuous applause. At the end of the testimonial, sweets were distributed to the huge crowd,





along with a copy of the beautiful Icon presented to the Metropolitan.

(*Below*, various moments from the monastery Feast Day activities and photographs of the unfinished interior of the new monastery Cathedral, the exterior of which appears, *above*, in the backdrop featured on stage at the Nameday testimonial. In the photographs of the new Church, please note the *marble floors* and the *magnificent capitals on the pillars* in the colonnades on the lower floor and balconies. The entire Church is being built by the Fathers of the monastery, literally supported by the proverbial mites of the faithful.)











These magnificent marble inlays, made of rare limestone pieces, depict ancient Christian symbols, such as the pelican feeding its young from its own blood (a symbol of Christ).