

Visit to the Parish of Sts. Seraphim of Sarov and John of Kronstadt in San Diego, California

ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, December 2 and 3, 2007 (Old Style), the Feasts of the Prophet Avvakoum and the Holy Prophet Sophonias, His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, and Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, with the blessing of Metropolitan Cyprian and Bishop Cyprian, Acting President of the Holy Synod, visited the parish of St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. John of Kronstadt in San Diego, California. On Sunday, they celebrated an Hierarchical Liturgy with the Pastor of the parish, Father Yakov Ferens (*Bishop Auxentios and Archbishop Chrysostomos are pictured during the Liturgy, below, left and right, respectively*).

Present at the service were Monk Sergius, who lives near the parish facility and helps with the choir and other Church activities; Father Yak-



ov's wife, Matushka Agnieszka, and their two sons, Matthew and John (both servers), and daughter, Xenia; and the dedicated members of the parish. The community welcomed the guests with touching and memorable Christian hospitality.

Father Yakov was formerly Pastor of a parish in San Diego that belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. He and his family and a significant group of his parishioners, rejecting the union of their former Bishops with the Moscow Patriarchate, sought refuge under our Synod of Bishops and have struggled, in the face of unfortunately untoward condemnation by their former jurisdiction, to maintain fidelity to an Orthodox witness consistent with their consciences.

In his exhortations to the parish during the Sunday Liturgy, His Eminence assured them that the fruits of wrongful persecution, if accepted with love and passivity, can be rich and nourishing, providing the soul with inner growth and making of our detractors—however hurtful their accusations—benefactors, as the Church Fathers tell us.

The visiting Hierarchs and Archimandrite Akakios were edified and moved by the faithful sacrifice of the members of the St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. John of Kronstadt parish. (*See a photograph of the some forty-one persons at the Liturgy, below.*) The active community, which is fortunately blessed with an excellent choir and pious servers, is also working slowly on adorning their rented place of worship with Icons



and frescoes in traditional style, aided in this by the fact that their Pastor, Father Yakov is an accomplished iconographer.

The parish treated the visiting Hierarchs and clergy to a beautiful Lenten meal, following the Divine Liturgy. This agape meal was the capstone to a memorable visit and an inspiring time of fellowship with this remarkable community of faithful. As His Grace, Bishop Auxentios expressed himself, on returning from his visit to the parish, “They treated us as though we were family, as we felt ourselves to be, and our visit was filled with literal Paschal joy.”

