

Archimandrite Akakios Visits our Sister Churches in Bulgaria and Romania

Following his participation in the Theophany Feast at his Mother Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Phyle, Greece, Archimandrite Father Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California, with the blessing of Metropolitan Vlasic and Bishop Photii—their First Hierarchs—visited our Sister Churches in Bulgaria and Romania, in which we have many spiritual friends and close spiritual brothers. He was treated, as usual, to inimitable hospitality in both countries.

In Bulgaria, where he spent a week with the brotherhood of the Episcopal residence of Bishop Photii, which is dedicated to St. Mark of Ephesus, Father Akakios benefited from the Hesychastic atmosphere and spirit of the Fathers and the quiet, beautiful services. He also had an opportunity to meet with many of the clergy of our Sister Church in Bulgaria, to visit a number of the faithful, and to make a visit to the beautiful Pokrov Convent, which during the Communist era served as a spiritual center for the Bulgarian Old Calendarists. It was established by the Russian Bishop of Sofia, St. Seraphim of Boguchar, under the direction of its late Abbess, Mother Seraphima (in the world, the former Princess Olga Lieven).

During his visit to the Pokrov Convent, Father Akakios participated, along with His Eminence, Bishop Photii and the Hieromonks who serve the convent, in a memorial service for Archimandrite Seraphim (*see photograph below; Archimandrite Akakios is at the far left*), one of the found-



ers of the community and a former professor at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Sofia, who was dismissed from his professorship on his refusal to accept the calendar reform enacted by the Church of Bulgaria in the middle of the last century. This was a fitting end to his memorable and moving visit.

- **After** his sojourn in Bulgaria, Father Akakios travelled on to visit several of the many hundreds of communities of our Sister Church in Romania, where the Old Calendarists have experienced a vibrant period of growth, with the construction of a score of new and beautiful monastic communities and parish Churches.

While in Romania, Father Akakios visited a number of monasteries, convents, and sketes, including the Annunciation Convent in Valea Rosie, an unofficial “sister community” of the Convent of St. Elizabeth in Etna, California. He also celebrated the Name Day of Bishop Antonie at his immense and impressive monastery in Cucova, where the Divine Liturgy, attended by a huge throng of faithful, was celebrated by His Grace, Bishop Antonie and Their Graces, Bishops Ghenadie, Teodosie, Glicherie, Iosif, and Dionisie.

Conveying his respects and the deep fraternal affection of Archbishop Chrysostomos and Bishop Auxentios to His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie, Father Akakios spent his last few days in Romania as the guest of His Grace, Bishop Flavian at the Dormition Monastery in Bucharest, of which His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos, is a brother *honorarius*, having made it his spiritual home during his Fulbright professorship in Romania. Father Akakios had the honor of celebrating the Name Day of the monastery’s Abbot, Archimandrite Eftimie, on the last day of his stay, at the monastery’s magnificent new Cathedral. The celebration, presided over by Bishop Flavian, was attended by an overflowing crowd of worshippers. (See *photograph below: His Grace, Bishop Flavian, flanked on left and right by Archimandrites Akakios and Eftimie, respectively.*) □

