

Reception for Bishop Auxentios' Parents

ON WEDNESDAY, April 8, 2010 (Old Style), a small reception to honor the parents of His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photiki was held in the lecture room of the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies at the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California. His father, George Byron Chapman, 92, and his mother, Ann Whitman Chapman, 86, were honored for their inimitable kindness to, and constant care for, the monastery, the Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, and the nearby Convent of Saint Elizabeth the Grand Duchess. (*See His Grace and his parents below, at left.*)



The reception began with the beautiful singing of the Paschal *Troparion*, “Christ is Risen,” in Greek, Church Slavonic (to a special Serbian melody), and English (to a traditional Romanian melody) by the members of the convent choir (*see next page*). Archbishop Chrysostomos then welcomed Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, noting that when their son, who was a student of His Eminence at Princeton, first converted to Orthodoxy and decided to become a monastic, he realized that it certainly must have been a difficult thing for his parents, who at the

time were not familiar with Orthodoxy and who had far different expectations for their son, whom they anticipated following in the footsteps of his father, also a Princeton graduate and the third generation in a row to assume responsibility for the family investment and insurance firm. Yet,

he observed, “you have nonetheless shown extraordinarily gracious and patient support for your son in a way that strengthened him in his ecclesiastical commitment, that demonstrates that all of his remarkable qualities and virtues are reflective of your own gifts, and that has inspired our monastic communities.”

His Grace’s parents—who have four other sons (one an attorney active in the family business along with another son, another the President of Honeybee Robotics, and another an Anglican clergyman)—said that over the years, despite the natural difficulties in accepting a decision somewhat foreign to them at first, they had grown in their own faith and were truly proud of their son, thanking the twenty-five monastics from the convent and monastery who were present at the reception for their example and guidance. In response, Archbishop Chrysostomos told His Grace’s father that, “a man who could produce a son such as yours is a better man than any of us could ever be,” and he assured His Grace’s mother that “your faith has inspired us all and far exceeds and outstrips our faith.”

Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, presented the Chapmans with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the monastery and study center, noting that: “Both of you, as the parents of Bishop Auxentios, are like a mother and father to all of us,” commenting on how astonishingly active and what a handsome couple they are at their ages. Mother Kypriane, with the blessing of Mother Elizabeth, Abbess of the Convent of Saint Elizabeth, presented Mr. and Mrs. Chapman with Icon prints of their respective patrons, Saint George and Saint Anna, taken from two Icons painted in the convent Icon studio. She, too, expressed how close the two monastic communities in Etna felt to the couple and how much their example had inspired all of the nuns.



The emotion-filled event, rich with tender human expressions of affection and warmth, but also a profound feeling of spiritual oneness, ended with a special musical presentation for the honored guests that the convent choir had prepared. Shortly after, a festive fasting dinner was served by the nuns in the convent guest *trapeza* (refectory), attended by His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, Mr. and Mrs. Chapman, Archimandrite Akakios, Abbess Mother Elizabeth, and Mother Kypriane. The couple, who reside in Aurora, Ohio, travelled to Etna for a few days from their Winter home in Carmel, California.

