

## Schema-nun Vera Celebrates Ninetieth Birthday

**WITH THE BLESSING** of Mother Elizabeth, Abbess of the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess in Etna, California, and with special permission from His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, assistant to Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna, on the afternoon of the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt, during the Great Fast, a special banquet of fasting foods was held in honor of the ninetieth birthday of Schema-nun Vera in the private banquet room of a Chinese restaurant in Yreka, California, near the village of Etna. Since it was not possible to do so on her Nameday, it was decided to honor Mother Vera in this way on her birthday.

For only the third time in the twenty-eight years since the Convent of St. Elizabeth and the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery were established in Etna, the monastics of the two communities gathered together



*Above, the two monastic communities with Mother Vera, seated. At left, a special fasting cake, elaborately decorated with various sugar flowers in the form of a Spring bouquet, the work of the Convent of St. Elizabeth.*

er, this time to honor the oldest member of either community. They were joined by Mother Vera's daughter and son-in-law, Alexis and Ekaterina Lukianov—who generously sponsored the event—together with their two children, Alexander (Sasha) and Anastasia (Tasya).

Mother Vera was born in Pinsk, Belarus, into the pious Russian Orthodox family of George and Christina Lubenik. Her family was dispersed by the events of war and she was sent to the infamous Nazi death camp at Dachau, from which, by the Grace of God, she was eventually transferred to a labor camp near Munich, Germany. From Germany, she made her way to America, where she married and reared two children.

In very moving and inspiring circumstances, after a near-death experience, Mother Vera, a widow, was tonsured to the Great Schema at eighty-seven years of age. She remains active in the life of the Convent of St. Elizabeth, communing almost daily and following the daily monastic cycle of services, which includes the Divine Liturgy, with stamina and remarkable consistency.

