

The Participation of our Holy Synod in the Celebration of the Feast of the Holy Hierarch and Confessor of Romania, Saint Glicherie

The Grace of the Divine Founder of our Church vouchsafed us again this year to participate in the celebration of the Feast of St. Glicherie (†June 15, 1985), the New Confessor of Orthodoxy, who was the founder and organizer of the Old Calendar Church in Romania. The tree of love and unity in Christ between Romanians and Greeks was thereby once more abundantly watered and bore spiritual fruits, which nourished souls and strengthened hearts for the continuation of a unanimous Orthodox witness.

With the blessing of our much-revered Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, and under the protection and guidance of the Most Blessed Theotokos, a group of ten people represented our Holy Synod in the celebrations honoring the Holy Hierarch and Confessor, St. Glicherie: His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod; His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone; Hieromonk Pachomios Hagiokyprianites (who hails from Romania); Nuns Seraphima and Kypriane (who is also Romanian) from the Convent of the Holy Angels; and our lay brethren and spiritual children, Irene Archontoule, Paschalia Adamopoulou, Spyridon and Athena Toudas, and Nicholas Giatrakos.

A. On Friday morning, June 11/24, 2011, we flew to Bucharest, where we were met at the airport by Archimandrite Nifon. Romania, approximately twice the size and population of Greece, is a country of breathtaking natural beauty and fascinating culture and history—a land imbued with Orthodox piety, which is particularly manifest in the provinces.

Heading east, at 5:30 p.m. we arrived at the port of Tulcea, where we were welcomed by Their Graces, Bishops Dionisie of Galați and Sofronie of Suceava. We then sailed in two small speedboats along the waterways of the Danube Delta. After an idyllic ninety-minute passage, we arrived at the Skete of St. Athanasios the Athonite, where we were greeted by the seven Fathers in the *Synodeia* of Bishop Dionisie,

the Founder and Abbot of the skete. After being received in the simple Church, we were given an *agape* meal and a tour of the grounds, all in an atmosphere of heartfelt brotherhood. The skete lies on approximately 37 acres of land, teeming with greenery. The Fathers, assisted by lay people, occupy themselves with cultivation and stockbreeding. Bishop Dionisie is a very active, open-hearted, and hospitable Bishop.

B. Saturday, June 12/25. Following the morning service and the Divine Liturgy—at which all of the Greek visitors communed—we were served breakfast. At 9:45 a.m., we left for the port of the coastal city of Sulina, once again by way of the Delta canals, where nature glorifies its Creator in its own way: water, trees, reeds, water lilies, and scores of birds, in landscapes now wild, now tame!

In Sulina, the Mayor welcomed us with great hospitality and served us a splendid meal. The Mayor is of Greek descent; Sulina was once one of the flourishing Greek cities on the Black Sea (*Pontos Euxinos*). In a warmhearted atmosphere, we presented gifts and were given a tour of the now poor city.



Following this, still by way of the river, we visited the nearby hermitage dedicated to St. Seraphim of Sarov (which belongs to the Skete of St. Athanasios), where Father Dometie practices the ascetic life in extreme poverty. His life is heroic indeed! Situated by the river and infested with swarms of mosquitoes, the entire

hermitage is flooded when the waters swell. With thoughts of self-reproach, we ate fish from the river, plagued on all sides by mosquitoes and insects, and in the end were caught in a downpour.

At 5 p.m., we had returned to the Skete of St. Athanasios and began the evening service an hour later. After a light dinner, we retired to the Skete's picturesque wooden guesthouses for the night.

C. Sunday, June 13/26. The morning service began at 6 a.m., after which the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the skete's Church, with Bishop Ambrose presiding. All of the Greek pilgrims communed. Following a plentiful breakfast, which was accompanied by words of Christian edification, we left for Tulcea at 11:20 a.m., amid torrential rain.

At 1:10 p.m., we arrived at the Monastery of the Nativity of the Venerable Forerunner, located in the outskirts of Tulcea. This monastery, founded in 1995, is a dependency of the central monastery in Bucharest under His Grace, Bishop Flavian of Ilfov. The construction work has by now progressed considerably, and



the monastery numbers eighteen monks under its venerable Abbot, Archimandrite Spiridon. Despite the constant rain and strong winds, the Brotherhood gave the Greek pilgrims a warm welcome in the monastery's large main Church, where Bishop Cyprian addressed words of edification to the monks regarding the monastic struggle against the three primary passions (ambition, avarice, and love of pleasure), by the Grace of the Holy Trinity, for the healing of the three faculties of the soul.

At 1:45 p.m., we headed northwest for the city of Galați, the See of Bishop Dionisie, who had already arrived in order to meet the visitors from Greece. The Monastery of the Holy Trinity, located in the city, received us with great love. Many of the local faithful had not left after the Divine Liturgy, but preferred to wait patiently until 3:30 p.m. to greet us with ringing of bells, flowers, and chanting. Bishop Cyprian delivered a short address, in which he spoke about the Orthodox ethos, which has as its model the Holy Trinity (distinction of Persons, unity of Essence),



and exhorted those present to constant (and perhaps greater) vigilance, because after the fall of the atheistic regime, we are in danger of slackening and adopting a worldly mentality. We chanted a *Trisagion* at the grave of the monastery's Founder, Archimandrite Teofilact (1929-2007), and

then were served an ample lunch. This beautiful monastery was founded in 1990, has seven Brothers, and also serves as the parish headquarters.

At 5 p.m., we left for a lengthy journey north, arriving at 10:45 p.m.

at the city of Fălticeni, just south of Suceava, Moldavia. We had a meal full of Romanian love and warmth at the house of one of the relatives of our own Father Pachomios.

D. Monday, June 14/27. Around 9 a.m., we arrived at the Convent of the Life-Giving Spring in Brădăţel, where the elderly Bishop Demosten of Neamţ resides. Infirm, but ever in good spirits and endowed with spiritual lucidity and maturity, he urged Bishop Cyprian to address words of edification to the Sisters. His Grace spoke on the subject of blessed obedience—in particular unquestioning and, consequently, wonderworking obedience. By way of illustration, he described the astonishing miracle of a contemporary Athonite monk, Elder Markellos of Philotheou, who obeyed his monastery’s Abbot “unhesitatingly, unquestioningly, and immediately, without objections, and with perfect faith and assurance.” This monastery has fifty-five nuns, and a large Church has been built in honor of St. Demetrios of Thessalonica. Bishop Demosten gave us a tour, showed us his future grave, gave us beautiful words of spiritual advice, and expressed his affection for us. Breakfast was light (since it was a fasting day), but rich in grace and joy in Christ.

At 11:40 a.m., we left for the Convent of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in the village of Păiseni, The convent’s spiritual Father, His Grace, Bishop Ghenadie of Bacău, was absent during our visit on account of ill health, but he was represented by the indefatigable Bishop Dionisie. When we arrived at the convent, the sisterhood gave us a warm welcome, with ringing of bells, flowers, and chanting. From the Beautiful Gates Bishop Cyprian exhorted the nuns to “endure sorrows, because only through sorrows will the tunics of our souls be whitened and we will ‘put on Christ,’ as was revealed to a monk who was grieved by another monk. This will allow us to chant the Apostolic words around the Throne of the Bridegroom: ‘As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.’” This immaculate convent, which lies seven kilometers from the central monastery in Slătioara, was founded in 1979 and numbers twenty-seven nuns under the Reverend Mother Minodora. In the reception room, we were treated to refreshments, exchanged best wishes, and the nuns superbly chanted Church hymns and folk songs.

At 3 p.m., despite the spiritual warmth of this blessed Sisterhood, we had to leave for Slătioara, in order to participate in the *Agrypnia* in honor of St. Glicherie. On the way, we visited the Convent of the Holy Myrrh-Bearers, which houses nineteen nuns under the Reverend Mother

Amfilohia (83 years old). Our reception, here too, was full of love, joy, and respect.

At 4:30 p.m., we arrived at the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Slătioara. We met His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie in his office and conveyed to him our deepest respects on behalf of our Holy Synod and flock, offering him several gifts as a token of our love and unity. He greeted us with much love and offered us words of consolation. The Greek delegation was then served a light meal. After this, with profound reverence we venerated the Grace-filled Relics of St. Glicherie, which are kept in the monastery's main Church in a beautiful wood-carved reliquary.



At 6 p.m., the All-Night Vigil (Vespers, Matins, and the First Hour) began in the monastery's large courtyard, with the participation of all of the Romanian Hierarchs, many Priests, and innumerable pious pilgrims, despite the inclement weather. The reliquary of the Saint was in our midst, such that St. Glicherie himself was the principle celebrant of the festal solemnity. The large choir, conducted by Father Andrei Onofrei, chanted truly angelically, exalting those present. Around midnight, we were back at our hotel in Fălticeni, suffused with the blessing of St. Glicherie.



E. Tuesday, June 15/28. At 6:30 a.m., we left for Slătioara. The outdoor Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, in which we took part, was greatly compunction-evoking and revivifying, despite the drizzle. At the end of the Liturgy, around 9:45 a.m., Metropolitan Vlasie spoke to the enormous and heroic congregation,

and then Bishop Ambrose read (in Romanian) a festal speech written by Bishop Cyprian on the subject: [“Imitators of St. Glicherie of Romania.”](#)

The major festal meal followed, which was also attended by local authorities. The atmosphere was magnificent from every viewpoint, and the unity between the two historic peoples—Greeks and Romanians—was superbly shown forth. We addressed each other and exchanged gifts in a spirit of enthusiastic love and profound mutual respect.



Before our departure, around 12:40 p.m., from the monastery (which numbers sixty-four monks, from the Metropolitan to the last novice), we were vouchsafed to venerate once again the Holy Reliquary of St. Glicherie and to visit his profoundly ascetic and fragrant cell. We also visited the immense new Church outside of the monastery precincts, dedicated to the Feast of Pentecost; it is now being frescoed.

At 1:20 p.m., we found ourselves before a great surprise: the newly founded Skete of St. Glicherie! It is expected that the facilities will soon be completed in the forested region of Măgura, just south of Slătioara, precisely where the persecuted Saint had remained in hiding in a hut in the forest for six years. His Grace, Bishop Sofronie is responsible for the skete, which, for the time being, will house four Brothers under the elderly Staretz Nectarie.

After a brief rest at our hotel, we visited the marvelous parish Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen in the city of Fălticeni, where we chanted a *Trisagion* at the grave of Father Vasilie (who met an untimely death in 2009). His successor, Father Sebastian, together with his family and parishioners, treated us to an *agape* meal.

F. Wednesday, June 16/29. At 7:30 a.m., we headed south, since we would be flying back to Athens that evening. Our first stop was at Târgu Neamț, where we were cordially greeted by our beloved friend, Father Vasilie Pătrăcescu at his humble and picturesque little house. We had a very moving and edifying conversation during breakfast, which his pious Presbyteria had prepared with great skill.

At 10:15 a.m., we arrived at the renowned Convent of the Protection of the Theotokos in Brădițel. The Greek delegation was given an en-



thusiastic and moving welcome, with persistent ringing of bells, chanting, and flowers—spiritual joy! This convent took root and grew—both spiritually and in terms of construction—during the persecutions by the atheistic regime. Its founder was Mother Macaria of blessed memory, who had initially lived in hiding in the region’s forest for a number of years in strict asceticism. We were vouchsafed to chant a *Trisagion* at her simple tomb. The Sisterhood of this immense convent now numbers 150 nuns, under the pious and very humble Mother Varvara. In the main Church, following the chanting, Bishop Cyprian was asked to address some words of edification to the nuns. He spoke about blessed obedience, which, when practiced in a God-pleasing manner, first of all heals the passions of pride and egotism, such that the monk (or nun) is able to depart with self-sacrifice from the narrow confines of his own self for the sake of his brother, and thus experience the mystery of love. Secondly, true obedience unites the members of a Brotherhood or Sisterhood, since all humbly and wittingly relinquish their own wills out of love for their brothers, thereby preserving peace and shattering the wiles of the evil spirits.

After the noon meal and a tour of the convent’s workshops, we left for Zănești, where we were welcomed at the beautiful parish Church of St. Nicholas by its affable Rector, Father Pavel, with his two musically gifted sons, who are also Priests. Father Pavel’s three brothers are also Priests, as was his father, Father Nicolae, who was the brother

of Metropolitan Silvestru of blessed memory. Our three-hour stay in the nearby house of Father Pavel was an unforgettable spiritual banquet.

At 4:15 p.m., we arrived at the famous and martyric Monastery of the Holy Trinity, in Cucova, which has been admirably flourishing from every viewpoint. The tomb of the ever-



memorable Bishop Pahomie lies in this monastery, where the sweet and modest Bishops Teodosie of Braşov and Antonie of Ploieşti reside. The Brotherhood numbers thirty-two monks, not including those who live in its dependencies; four men's sketes and six convents belong to this monastery.

At 5 p.m., we left for the Bucharest airport and had a calm flight back to Greece, sheltered by the Protection of the Theotokos, the wings of the Holy Angels, and the blessing of St. Glicherie.

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Glory to God for all things!

This was yet another profitable and edifying visit, in that we were given the opportunity to celebrate and communicate in genuine love with like-minded brothers and sisters in the Faith. The creative activity of our Romanian brethren, their vibrant and vigorous monasticism, their exemplary hospitality and multifarious expressions of Christian esteem and brotherhood for the venerable person of the ailing President of our Holy Synod, Metropolitan Cyprian, and his successors, demonstrate the abundant blessing of the Grace of God on their martyric Church.

May the blessing of St. Glicherie ever strengthen the bonds of our unity!

Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi