

Feast Day of the Convent of St. Elizabeth in Etna, CA, Adorned by the Presence of a Bishop and a Group of Pilgrims from Our Sister Church in Romania

On Wednesday, July 5, 2012 (Old Style), the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia, in Etna, CA, celebrated its Feast with jubilation, being honored by the presence of His



Grace, Bishop Iosif of Botoșani, from our populous Sister Church in Romania. His Grace—the nephew of Metropolitan Vlasiu, Chief Hierarch of the Old Calendar Church of Romania—comes from a family of ten monastics. He and a group of seven pilgrims travelled to the U.S. to venerate the Relics of St. John of San Francisco, whom our faithful in Romania greatly revere, and to visit our two monastic communities and small parish in Etna, where they arrived on the eve of the Feast Day of the convent.

In addition to the pilgrims from Romania—Mr. Constantine and Dr. Maria Scinteanu (a physician who attends, in her locale, to the medical needs of many hundreds of the immense number of Old Calendarist monastics in Romania) and their four children, and Dr. Scinteanu's sister, Florica Grigore, an instructor in mathematics—Mr. and Mrs. Gheorghe Ghețu, a Romanian immigrant family from Mesa, AZ, who attend our Exarchate parish in San Diego, CA, joined the pilgrims from Romania.

On the eve of the convent feast, His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos and Their Graces, Bishop Iosif and Bishop Auxentios attended the Vespers and Matins vigil, along with the married Priest who serves the convent, Father George Mavromatis, and the two married Priests assigned to the small parish of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Etna, Fathers David Cownie and Jerome Zubricky. The full convent choir chanted the services magnificently and movingly in English, Greek, Slavonic, and Romanian, lending a truly pan-Orthodox spirit to them.

Again on the Feast itself, despite his chronic health problems and a recent serious infection, Archbishop Chrysostomos served

the Divine Liturgy together with Their Graces, Bishop Iosif and Bishop Auxentios (*from left to right, below*). Once more, it was



served in four languages in an atmosphere of fraternal fellowship and Grace that touched all who were present. The Liturgy was followed by a procession around the convent Church (see photographs below).



Immediately after the Liturgy, refreshments were served in the convent's reception room. There shortly followed a full meal, to which all present were invited. After the usual monastic readings, the visitors and lay faithful from Etna had an opportunity to speak with one another. During this time, His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos, speaking in what he described as his "nearly non-existent" Romanian, which deeply moved the visitors, spoke of "the wonderful example of the Romanian Old Calendar Church

to us living in the wasteland of a minimalistic and, even in its traditionalist form, immature Orthodoxy,” and how much all of us in our Exarchate owe to our Romanian brothers and sisters. His Grace, Bishop Iosif responded by emphasizing that it was St. Glicherie, the martyric founder of the much persecuted and suffering Old Calendar Church in Romania, together with our ailing spiritual Father, Metropolitan Cyprian, who sealed with their holiness and their spiritual love for one another the fruitful unity of our two Churches.

With a renewed spirit of unity and brotherly affection in Christ, the day after the Feast Day of St. Elizabeth, our Romanian “family” departed for their home, taking with them a portion of the hearts of those of us in this country to Romania, and leaving with us a portion of their hearts in our community here in Etna!

