

Pilgrimage to Romania

The Strengthening of Our Unity Through the Blessing of St. Glicherie



The participation, this year, by members of the Holy Synod in Resistance in the Great Feast of the Transfiguration of the Savior at the headquarters of the Metropolis of our beloved Romanian Old Calendarist brethren, in Slătioara, Moldavia, was of especial significance and importance, since its purpose, *inter alia*, was to reassert and strengthen our blessed mutual unity of many decades. An additional purpose of the pilgrimage was to visit those sacred places in Romania in which the Holy Confessor and Hi-





erarch Glicherie resided, a part of his life and struggles being bound up with them.

By Divine Grace, through the protection of the Mother of God, by the intercessions of St. Glicherie, and with the benediction of our ailing Metropolitan Cyprian, these goals were achieved in a way that surpassed all expectations, and the many amazing blessings of



the pilgrimage already constitute a precious treasure in the souls of those who took part in them, to the glory of God.

• **On** the morning of Wednesday, August 2/15, 2012, thirteen pilgrims from Greece flew to the capital city of Bucharest, Romania, from which city they drove to Fălticeni, Moldavia: Their Graces,



Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod, Bishop Ambrose of Methone, and Bishop Klemes of Gardikion (the author of this report), a Subdeacon from the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, two nuns from the

Convent of the Holy Angels, in Aphidnai, Attica, and seven laypeople (three men and four women). The Greek pilgrims were joined in Bucharest by one of our Priests from South Ossetia, the Reverend Father Yakov Khetagourov.

Their five-day sojourn in Romania began with visits to some of the immense, beautiful, and thriving monasteries and Churches that adorn the Old Calendar Church of Romania (the Monastery of St. Menas, in Roșiori; the Convent of St. Paraskeve the New, in Iași; the Church of the Three Holy Hierarchs, in Tîrgu Frumos; the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen, in Fălticeni; the Convent of the Life-Giving Spring, in Brădățel; the Convent of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in Păiseni; the Convent of the Holy Myrrh-Bearers, in Buda; the Convent of the Holy Protection of the Theotokos, in Brădițel; the Monastery of the Holy Trinity, in Cucova), in an atmosphere of fervent fraternal love and abundant hospitality—a trait of the warm people of Romania, who combine Latin fervor with Slavic virtue.

The Greek visitors also made visits to historic Churches and monasteries belonging to the (New Calendar) Romanian Patriarchate: the Church of St. Paraskeve the New of Epivat, in Iași, where the incorrupt Relics of this wonder-working Saint are kept, the Church of the Three Holy Hierarchs, also in Iași, and various monasteries in Bukovina, renowned for their exterior frescoes, as well as the Monasteries of Râșca, (St. Nicholas) and Ghighiu (the Life-Giving Spring).



• **The** sacred and God-pleasing unity of our Holy Synod with our Romanian Old Calendarist brethren was discussed at a special inter-Synodal consultation at the Monastery of the Transfiguration of the Savior in Slătioara, on Friday, August 4/17, two days before its Feast Day.

After venerating the Holy Relics of St. Glicherie in the *Katholikon* (main Church) of the monastery and prayerfully participating (from the Altar) in a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy celebrated by one of the Romanian Bishops, the entire Hierarchy of the Romanian Old Cal-



endar Church (Their Graces, Bishop Demosten of Neamț, Bishop Ghenadie of Bacău, Bishop Sofronie of Suceava, Bishop Teodosie of Brașov, Bishop Iosif of Botoșani, Bishop Flavian of Ilfov, Bishop Antonie

of Ploiești, Bishop Glicherie of Iași, Bishop Dionisie of Galați, and Bishop Evloghie of Sibiu), under His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie, took their seats in a room within the monastery, together with the three Hierarchs from Greece. In order to facilitate the consultation, the Greek Bishops had earlier sent two formal documents. These documents were delivered to their Romanian brothers, who had by now studied them.

In a prayerful atmosphere, with fraternal love, respect and esteem, declarations were made and discussions were held that contributed to a clarification of certain issues of an ecclesiological and pastoral nature, which of late had, unfortunately, occasioned disquiet for some of the Romanian Bishops. Thus, in the end satisfaction prevailed on both sides, and our enduring and God-established unity was not only *not shaken*—as had been the aim of a small number of persons who, whether with good or other intentions, were warring against this unity and striving to influence even the Hierarchs—but was *immensely strengthened*.



• **Indeed**, the concelebration of the Transfiguration at Slătioara during the following two days set a crown on our continued love and communion, of many years' duration, in God.

On the afternoon of Saturday, August 5/18, with the participation of His Eminence, Bishop Photii of Triaditza, who had arrived from Sofia, Bulgaria, with a Priest and a Hierodeacon, and also of the



Very Reverend Archimandrite Akakios, from Etna, California, representing the Exarchate of our Holy Synod in America (whose Bishops have a great love for the Romanian Hierarchs, clergy and, faithful, but who could not attend the celebrations because of Archbishop Chrysostomos' health and Bishop Auxentios' assumption of His Eminence's pressing duties at a particularly difficult time for the Ex-



archate), Great Vespers was celebrated with solemnity in the courtyard of the monastery, followed by Matins of this Great Feast of the Lord, which went on until late in the evening. In addition to the fifteen Hierarchs, dozens of Priests and Deacons and a huge crowd of faithful were present. The hymns of the Feast were superbly chant-



ed in Byzantine style by the choir of the Holy Metropolis of Slătioara, and both the Relics of the Holy Hierarch Glicherie and a wonder-working Icon of the Mother *Umilenie* (“of Contrition”), from Russia, were set out for veneration, the Icon having been brought to Romania for veneration.

On the morning of Sunday, August 6/19, a solemn Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was served in the open air, with His Eminence, Metropolitan Vlasie as the principal celebrant, in the midst of a throng of many thousands of the faithful, who unreservedly expressed their joy over our liturgical concelebration, as well as their love and esteem for their brethren from Greece.



After the Dismissal, Metropolitan Vlasie delivered a festal homily. Following this, His Grace, Bishop Cyprian also delivered a sermon on the Feast, which was translated into Romanian by His Grace, Bishop Ambrose, and then His Eminence, Bishop Photii from Bulgaria (a polyglot and former professor) read his own brief festal message in Romanian. Finally, His Grace, Bishop Demosten, a venerable veteran of the Old Calendarist movement, gave a powerful speech, his eighty-five years of age notwithstanding, in which he particularly emphasized the legacy of the unity between the Romanian and Greek Old Calendarists bequeathed to us by the Holy Metropolitan Glicherie and our own venerable Chief Shepherd, Metropolitan Cyprian.

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There followed a procession around the main monastery Church and the veneration of the Holy Relics of St. Glicherie.

After the festal meal, the three Bishops from Greece and Bishop Photii had the opportunity to chant a *Trisagion* over the grave of the ever-memorable Metropolitan Silvestru (†1992) on the twentieth anniversary of his departure to the Lord, and also to venerate the hallowed cell of St. Glicherie, afterwards offering our good wishes in private to Metropolitan Vlasiu, their successor, on the twentieth anniversary of his accession to the office of First Hierarch. For his part,



the Metropolitan expressed his satisfaction over the affirmation of our love, unity, and communion in Christ. On this occasion gifts were exchanged.

• **Furthermore**, the Grace-filled blessings of St. Glicherie were not confined to those that we have hitherto set forth. Be-

ginning on Thursday, August 3/16, we had the opportunity to visit the historic Holy Monastery of Cetățuia, dedicated to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, in which in 1916, before the calendar innovation, at the age of twenty-five, St. Glicherie dedicated himself to the monastic life and was tonsured a monk, ordained a Hierodeacon (1918) and a Hieromonk (1920), and in which he stayed for five years in all.

That same day we continued our journey in the footsteps of St. Glicherie. We visited and worshipped at the historic Holy Monastery of Neamț, dedicated to the Ascension of the Savior, in which St. Glicherie served for about two years, and also the Holy Skete of Pocrov, that is, of the Holy Protection of the Theotokos, in an isolated



location a few kilometers away from the monastery, to which St. Glicherie was appointed Superior in 1922 and in which he remained until the end of 1925, when, on account of his adherence to the traditional Festal Calendar of the Orthodox Church, he was compelled, following the adoption of the Papal Calendar by the Romanian Pa-

triarchate, to leave the skete and take refuge in the hills and forests of Moldavia.

Our meeting, in the evening of the same day, with the much-revered Reverend Father Vasile Petrasescu in his home in Țirgu Neamț was a veritable revelation for us! Father Vasile was the first clergyman (of the Romanian Old Calendar Church) with whom our monastery made contact. It was through him that we came to know about the Old Calendar Church of Romania in 1977, and he contributed a great deal to the union of our Churches. Father Vasile, seventy-three years old today, is one of only three surviving clergyman whom St. Glicherie himself ordained. On this occasion, and with a view to our collecting data for the purpose of publishing in Greek as complete a life of St. Glicherie as possible, a project which we intend to undertake in the near future, Father Vasile enriched us with an abundance of important facts, mostly unknown in the sources that we have had before us and have been using until now. Father Vasile, as a living source concerning the holy life of the Saint, distilled for us an impressive spiritual facet of St. Glicherie's personality and of his loving and discerning pastoral ministry to the clergy and people not recorded in books, which we will endeavor to include in the Greek edition (and a subsequent English translation of which the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California has promised to complete) of his life.

Our collection of data regarding the Saint was completed by the stories of the indefatigable Bishop Demosten, at whose Consecration to the Episcopate St. Glicherie presided. He spoke at greater length about the Saint's guidance of his monks, which was truly meticulous and exacting.

Finally, we completed our journey with a visit to the Holy Convent of St. Glicherie, in a forest in the region of Râșca, roughly half an hour's distance by automobile from the Monastery of Slătioara, where the Saint remained in hiding for five years (1941-1945), on account of persecution for his traditionalist stand against the calendar innovation, living a holy and martyric life. The area has been transformed into a spiritual oasis during the past few years, with a beautiful wooden Church, within which a portion of the Saint's Relics is preserved, and also with other impressive buildings; meanwhile, the

work of construction continues. His Grace, Bishop Sofronie is Superior of the convent.

• **Our** blessed and very important pilgrimage, right up to our return to Greece on the evening of Monday, August 7/20, proved especially fruitful and beneficial. It is our hope that the intercessions of St. Glicherie will not cease to strengthen us Romanian and Greek Old Calendarists, and also true Orthodox Christians throughout the world, in the common struggle for faith and virtue, so that with one mouth and one heart we might glorify the Tri-Hypostatic Godhead. Amen!

† *Bishop Klemes of Gardikion*

