

The Feast of St. Sava of Serbia in Canberra, Australia

ON Wednesday, January 10/23, 2013, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone visited Australia once again, as *Locum Tenens* of our Diocese there, in order to preside at the Feast Day of the Holy Monastery of St. Sava of Serbia in Canberra. His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photike, from Etna, California, U.S.A., also traveled to Australia for this important event.

The Monastery of St. Sava and its Church were built by Serbian Orthodox émigrés belonging to the “Free Serbian Orthodox Church,” which was separated from the Serbian Patriarchate during the Communist era in Yugoslavia, primarily for political reasons. The monastery covers an area of more than fifty acres, within which there are to be found: a magnificent Church, an Episcopal residence, quarters for monks, a cemetery, summer camping facilities for children, apartments, a meeting hall, a *trapeza* with seating for six hundred people, outbuildings, and outdoor areas, etc.



At the monastery, on Saturday, January 13/26, Bishop Auxentios celebrated a special Liturgy at the conclusion of the camping season (in Australia they are at the height of summer!), in which twenty-five children took part, under the direction of Hegumen Father John (Smelic) of our sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA), under the



jurisdiction of His Eminence, Metropolitan Agafangel.

On Sunday, January 14/27, the Festal Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the *Katholikon* of St. Sava of Serbia by Bishop Ambrose, with the participation of Bishop Auxentios, our own clergy, Archpriest Dragan Saracević, Father Zvonimir Jović, Father Bojan Vlajić, and Father Stylianos



Papadopoulos, who came with a group of faithful from Melbourne, and also clergy from the ROCA, Hegumen Father John, Protodeacon Father Basil Yakimov, and Deacon Father Nebojsa Mirković. The small choir





was directed by Sister Elizabeth (from the ROCA). A large crowd of faithful, mainly Serbs, but also Greeks, was present. Bishop Ambrose preached a homily in English and Bishop Auxentios offered greetings on the occasion of the Feast.

At the end of the Divine Liturgy there was a procession with the Icon of St. Sava around the imposing Church, followed by the celebration of the *Slava* (the blessing of the *Slavski Kolač*, a special loaf of bread), in accordance with the Serbian tradition, inside the Church, and finally by the installation of Bishop Ambrose as the legally recognized Bishop of the “Free Serbian Orthodox Church of Australia and New Zealand.”

A large number of guests attended the ensuing festal banquet, and it is estimated that several thousand pilgrims were present during the course of the day.

During his five-day sojourn in Australia, Bishop Ambrose also visited the parishes of St. George, in Canberra, and of the Holy Unmercenaries,



in Sydney, presided over a meeting of the Episcopal Council, resolved various matters, and met with many faithful, primarily Serbs and Greeks.

He departed from Australia by air on Tuesday, January 16/29, arriving safely in Greece the following day, after completing this important pastoral journey.

