

## Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California, Visits New York Communities

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland, on the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, 8 May 2015 (Old Style), Archimandrite Akakios attended the Feast Day services of the Holy Ascension Church in Rochester, NY, which is administered by Bishop Auxentios (*see photograph below*), where he served the Vigil for the Feast with Father Nicholas Chernjavsky, Rector of the parish, and Deacon Father Peter Bushunow. On the Feast itself, he concelebrated with Father Nicholas, Deacon Father Peter, Father Sergius Boulter, from Cleveland, OH, who was recently received into our Synod, and Father Thomas Maretta, from our Synod's parish of St. Maximos the Confessor in Owego, NY. Father Akakios was treated to the inimitable graciousness of the parish, not only at the *Agape* meal in the parish hall after Liturgy, but later by the clergy and their families and by the parishioners. He was lodged in the elegant home of Sergij and Valeria Chernjavsky, the parents of Father Nicholas, always constant in their extraordinary hospitality.



Deacon Father Peter drove Father Akakios, on the day following the Feast, Friday, to the beautiful Monastery of the Holy New Martyrs of Russia in Mountain View, NY, the residence of Archbishop Andronik of Syracuse and St. Nicholas, a Hierarch of our Sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and a close friend of our monastery in Etna, where they enjoyed lunch and warm fellowship. (*See photograph at left.*)



Later in the same day, they travelled to our Synod's Monastery of the Ascension, in Bearsville, the residence of the President of the Eparchial Synod in America, Metropolitan Demetrios, which is under construction. His Eminence and the monastery brotherhood showed wonderful hospitality to the visitors, who attended early Matins and the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning. Father Akakios and Father Peter were deeply

impressed by the piety of the brotherhood (some sixteen monks), the good order that prevailed in the midst of the daunting task of building a new monastic facility, and the quiet, monastic tone of the services.

On Saturday afternoon, the Fathers drove to Owego, NY, in order to visit the parish of St. Maximos the Confessor, arriving at the end of Vespers. They were warmly greeted by Father Thomas Maretta, the Rector of the Church, and Dr. Lazarus Gehring, a physician with nine children, on whose property the small, beautiful stone Church is located. (*See Father Akakios and Dr. Gehring and the parish Church.*)



Later Saturday afternoon, Father Akakios and Deacon Father Peter continued their journey, arriving at the Convent of St. Nicholas in Cleveland, NY, where, with the blessing of Bishop Auxentios, Archbishop Andronik, and Mother Agapia, the Superior of the Convent, they participated in the Vigil for the Feast of the Convent on Sunday, the Sunday of the Fathers of the First Oecumenical Synod and the Feast of the Translation of the Relics of St. Nicholas. The next day, at the Feast Day Liturgy, with Archbishop Andronik as chief server, the Fathers concelebrated with Archpriest Vsevolod Dutikow, Rector of the historical Holy Trinity Church in Astoria, NY, a parish of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, which is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary, Father Thomas Maretta, Father Sergius Boulter, Father Vsevolod's Deacon, Father Dimitri Dobronravov, and Archbishop Andronik's Deacon, Hierodeacon Pavel. A festive meal followed the Divine Liturgy. (*See the gathered faithful and clergy below.*)

After returning to Rochester, Father Akakios left New York by air the next morning, Monday, for the monastery in Etna, much edified by his short but spiritually beneficial pastoral visit to New York. He was especially grateful to Deacon Father Peter, a physician, who rescheduled his hospital duties and patient appointments to drive him and to accompany him to all these holy venues and to serve with him at the Feast of St. Nicholas.

