

The Enthronement of His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland

On April 13 (Old Style), 2015, the Sunday of the Myrrh-Bearing Women, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, formerly Titular Bishop of Photike, who was elected, in January of this year, by the Holy Synod of the Genuine Orthodox Church of Greece to the newly formed See of Etna and Portland, was enthroned in ceremonies at the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California. The event, which was, at His Grace's request, small, modest, low-key, and monastic in tone, was nonetheless a moving and spiritually memorable experience for all who attended.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated by four Priests, four Deacons, a Subdeacon, and four Bishops: His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrios of America, President of the Eparchial Synod of our Church in the United States, Canada, and South America, representing the Holy Synod and His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos of Athens; His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses of Toronto; and His Grace, the Right Reverend Sergios, Bishop *emeritus* of the former diocese of Portland. His Eminence, the Most Reverend Chrysostomos, Metropolitan *emeritus* of the former diocese of Etna, was also in prayerful attendance.

The monastic atmosphere of the service was enhanced by the presence of the brotherhood of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, the sisterhood of the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia, also located in Etna, and a contingent of monks from the St. Gregory of Sinai Monastery, in Kelseyville, California, which Bishop Sergios serves as Abbot. A Hierodeacon from the Monastery of the Ascension, in Bearsville, New York, of which Metropolitan Demetrios is Abbot, also accompanied His Eminence.

Among the non-monastic clergy participating in the Divine Liturgy were Protopresbyter Constantine Parr, Rector of the Nativity of the Holy *Theotokos* Cathedral in Portland, Oregon, Father George Mavromatis, serving Priest at the Convent of St. Elizabeth, and Deacon Father Peter Bushunow, who travelled from the parish of the Holy Ascension in Rochester, New York, for the enthronement services. In prayerful attendance were the two married clergy from the small parish of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Etna, Protopresbyter David Cownie and Father Jerome Zubricky.

The ceremony was chanted antiphonally by the small choir of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, assisted by Metropolitan Chrysostomos, and, chanting from the side Chapel, the larger choir of the Convent of St. Elizabeth. Greek Byzantine, Slavonic, Serbian, Romanian, and Bulgarian liturgical melodies were sung in Greek, English, Romanian, Slavonic, and Arabic, in accordance with Bishop Auxentios' stated intention of continuing the firm commitment of his spiritual Father, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, to a multilingual and multicultural witness by the Etna monastic communities to the array of traditions that constitute the catholic (universal) confession of Genuine Orthodoxy.

After the beautiful enthronement ceremony, which reached its culmination at the end of the Liturgy, Metropolitan Demetrios delivered a short homily of moving words directed to the newly enthroned Bishop Auxentios, after which His Grace read a longer sermon about the witness of his new diocese and the Holy Synod to the contemporary world. Both of these appear below as separate postings.

The enthronement activities were followed by a small banquet for some fifty-five persons, held in the parish hall of a local Protestant church, which was kindly made available by its minister and church committee. The delicious Greek and Arabic food and various desserts were prepared by a Palestinian Orthodox community very closely tied to the monastery and by the Convent of St. Elizabeth, whose nuns worked tirelessly in preparing the facility and decorating the tables with elegant place settings.

After the food was served, Metropolitan Demetrios greatly inspired those present, speaking to the hearts of all, with his words about our recent Church union and the need for love in witnessing to the strictness of Orthodoxy without fanaticism. He then presented His Grace, Bishop Auxentios with a beautiful Icon produced at his monastery. Metropolitan Moses spoke afterwards, offering excellent, down-to-earth words of counsel on living the Faith in the corruption of contemporary society. Bishop Sergios also spoke, with a richness of experience and wisdom, mentioning his closeness to our community in Etna. He likewise presented His Grace—as a personal gift—with a complete twenty-volume set of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, and the brotherhood of his monastery gave His Grace a graceful Icon produced in its Icon studio.

In turn, Deacon Father Peter Bushnow gave the newly enthroned Bishop, on behalf of his home parish in Rochester, a magnificent episcopal walking stick—sometimes called a *πατερίτσα* (*pateritsa*), but more colloquially a *βαστούνι* (*bastouni*) or *μαγκούρα* (*mangoura*)—carved by one of the parish’s Readers, Gregory Roller. From two of his dedicated spiritual children, Nadejda and Lubov Sapounova, His Grace was given an i-Pad to aid with his correspondence. From the parish of St. John the Baptist, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, His Grace received two hand-blown, etched Czech crystal vases for the monastery Holy Table.

As well, the parish of St. Seraphim of Sarov and St. John of Kronstadt, in San Diego, California, and Protopresbyter Joseph Miller and his wife, Presbyter Barbara (living in retirement in Seattle, Washington) sent generous monetary gifts to help Bishop Auxentios in his work. Many others, who wished not to be acknowledged, sent gifts for the occasion, and countless individuals were indefatigable in their efforts to see that this event was successful.



Above, His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrios of America. At right, left to right, His Grace, Bishop Sergios and His Eminence, Metropolitan Moses.



Scenes from the Culmination of the Enthronement Service at the End of the Divine Liturgy





The Enthronement Banquet