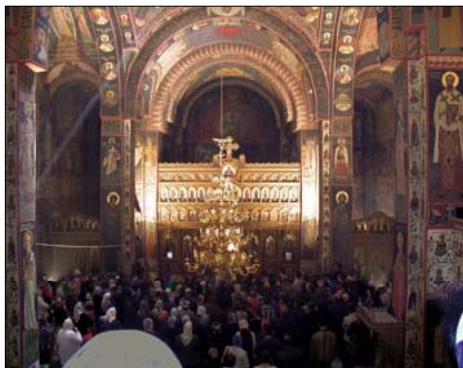


Joyous Festal Fellowship With Our Romanian and Bulgarian Brothers and Sisters

This past May, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Akakios, Abbot of the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Etna, California, along with the Reverend Father Dr. Joseph Miller and two brothers of the monastery, Hieromonk Father Gregory and Rasophore-monk Father Vlasie, visited our Sister Old Calendarist Churches in Romania and Bulgaria.



In Bucharest, the pilgrims were hosted by the Monastery of the Dormition of the Theotokos and its Abbot, His Grace, Bishop Flavian of Ilfov, where they took part in the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of the Paralytic (May 1, 2006, Old Style), during which Father Akakios delivered a sermon to the packed crowd of believers in the magnificent monastery Church.



From Bucharest, they travelled on to Sofia, together with His Grace, Bishop Flavian and other clergy from the Monastery of the

Dormition of the Theotokos.

There, on the Wednesday of Mid-Pentecost (May 4, 2006, Old Style), they all took part, along with His Eminence, Bishop Photii of Triaditsa and the Bulgarian clergy, in the Glorification and the first public celebration of the Feast of the Holy New Martyrs of the village of Batak, where five thousand Orthodox Christians were brutally slaughtered by the Turks, in 1876, when they refused to convert to Islam, in order to save their lives.

The Feast and celebration were conducted in the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Mother of God, with a large throng of the Faithful in attendance. The official Icon of the New Martyrs was painted at the Convent of St. Elizabeth in Etna, California.

The manifest fraternity and love in Christ among the members of our Sister Churches, which was crowned by the common celebration and participation in the One Divine Eucharist, constitute a precious gift of God, the maintenance and expansion of which demands our every sacrifice. In the attainment of this sacred aim, may the sacrifices of our past and contemporary Saints be an example to us and inspire us.



Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, no. 333 (July-August, 2006), pp. 316-317.