

A Missionary Community in Pistoia, Italy Aligns Itself with the Synod in Resistance*



The Abbot of the Monastery of St. Seraphim of Sarov, Pistoia, Central Italy, Father Silvano (Livi), together with his Brotherhood, joined the Holy Synod in Resistance on 27 August 1999 (Old Style), following a decision on this matter by the “Orthodox Christian Association of Sts. Agapitus the Martyr and St. Seraphim of Sarov,” of which Father Silvano is the President.

This Association, which is recognized by the Italian government, includes also the Holy Wisdom Parish in Pistoia, with its rector, the Community of St. Agapitus, which is dedicated to helping young people, the St. Gregory the Great Free Orthodox Faculty of Theology, the Association’s educational institution, and several other small communities of Faithful scattered throughout different parts of Italy.

Father Silvano comes from a well-to-do Roman Catholic family, and from an early age he had a particular proclivity for seeking after the genuine truth about God and the meaning of life. These interests led him to study philosophy (in which he has a doctorate), and subsequently theology and psychology, and, aided by his classical studies and his knowledge of ancient Greek, he began to study the Fathers of the Church. Although he recognized that Papism had altered the Christian Faith and its ethos, he nonetheless entertained some naïve hopes that it would be possible to work within the Latin Church as a clergyman for the emergence of a more traditional and Patristic Roman Catholicism.

These hopes, as one might expect, were quickly dashed, and Father Silvano realized that conditions were ripe for his entrance into Orthodoxy, the very Church of Christ.

Metropolitan Spyridon, the representative of the Œcumenical Patriarchate in Italy, who later became Archbishop of America, on hearing of Father Silvano’s petition to be received into the Orthodox Church, discouraged him from becoming Orthodox and sent him away, since, in his view, the union of the two “Sister Churches” of Old and New Rome was imminent!

Thus, in 1985, Father Silvano was received by the Moscow Patriarchate,

but with absolute secrecy. Throughout the time that he remained with this Patriarchate, he encountered complete indifference and reluctance on the part of his ecclesiastical superiors to provide him with any spiritual assistance whatsoever.

His disenchantment, but also his thirst for genuine Orthodoxy, directed his steps towards the Holy Mountain. There, he was urged by the distinguished Abbot of one of the large monasteries not to place himself under the Church of Constantinople, since his situation would only deteriorate if he did so, but to have recourse to the Serbian Church. This he did in 1993.

Initially, the Serbian Patriarchate showed some interest, but for a very short time. The situation that he had previously encountered with the Moscow Patriarchate continued, without even rudimentary assistance; for example, letters that he sent concerning urgent and vital matters in the life of his monastery (tonsures, etc.) remained consistently unanswered. And, more importantly, his superior, Metropolitan Jovan of Zagreb, who was now residing in Trieste, Italy, was engaging in ecumenical activities. When Father Silvano protested about these activities, he faced the displeasure of his Bishop, who in other respects was inaccessible. His protests and appeals to the Patriarchate in Belgrade likewise remained unanswered.

After much reflection, prayer, and study, as well as private meetings with many leading Churchmen of different jurisdictions and outlooks, both New Calendarists and Old Calendarists, Father Silvano and those with him decided to join the Holy Synod in Resistance, embracing her ecclesiology and placing themselves directly under the President of the Holy Synod, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian. On 24 August/6 September 1999, Father Silvano notified the Serbian Church, in a well-documented text of many pages, of the serious reasons for his departure from it and also of his new canonical and spiritual affiliation.

Father Silvano Liturgized with Metropolitan Cyprian at our monastery on Sunday, 30 August 1999 (Old Style), at which time he was elevated to the dignity of Archimandrite. In the afternoon of the same day, he was tonsured to the Great Schema (see photograph).

We pray that Divine Grace will richly bless Father Silvano's important missionary work, which is now acquiring a new and distinctive significance and purview in his native land, to the glory of God and in testimony of the genuine and anti-innovationist Confession of our saving Faith.

* Source: *Άγιος Κυπριανός*, No. 291 (July-August 1999), pp. 218-219.