

Visit by Italian Clergy of the Synod of Resistance to Odessa, Ukraine

On Friday, December 15/28, 2007, representatives of the Italian Exarchate of the Holy Synod in Resistance, led by His Eminence, Bishop Silouan of Luni, accompanied by Protopresbyter Vitaly Stilian, parish Priest from Pistoia, the Reverend Father Stefano Dell'Isola, parish Priest in Rome, and Archdeacon Seraphim, departed by air from Rome to Odessa, Ukraine, for the purpose of visiting the President of the Temporary Supreme Ecclesiastical Administration of our Sister Church, the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad (ROCA), His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel of Odessa and Tauris, at his See, as well as to visit the Holy Convent of the Annunciation of the *Theotokos* and St. John of San Francisco,



the Abbess of which, the Very Reverend Mother Alexandra, had earlier visited Bishop Silouan, on the occasion of an ecclesiastical celebration.

On Sunday, 17/30, 2007, His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel and His Eminence, Bishop Silouan, along with their clergy, concelebrated an Hierarchical Liturgy, in the presence of the pious Orthodox flock.

In his sermon at the end of the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Agafangel warmly thanked Bishop Silouan for his visit and for the liturgical celebration, which confirmed the full Eucharistic communion of our Churches, following, indeed, the participation of our Hierarchs, a short time ago in Odessa, in the Consecration of Bishops for the restoration of the ROCA, since the majority of its Bishops, under Metropolitan Laurus, undertook to unite with the Moscow Patriarchate (in May of 2007). His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel emphasized particularly his persistent fidelity to the union of our Churches, which he reckoned in every way unbreakable.

His Eminence, Bishop Silouan, on his part, donated a portion of the Relics of the Holy Martyr Alexander of Kentoukellai (commemorated on May 14) whose Grace-flowing Relics are held in the Monastery of St.

Seraphim of Sarov, in Pistoia, Italy, stressing that often, in antiquity, local Churches showed the bonds of union between them by making gifts of the sacred Relics of Holy Martyrs.

Also, another portion of the Relics of the same Holy Martyr was given to the Sisterhood of the Convent of the *Theotokos*, under Mother Alexandra, where His Eminence, Bishop Silouan, offered interesting instructions regarding the subject of *theosis* (or human deification by Grace through union with Christ), and where Father Stefano Dell'Isola occasioned to deliver two homilies on the history of the Divine Liturgy.

The Sisterhood of the Convent, as a sign of gratitude, gave Bishop Silouan a magnificent Icon of St. John of San Francisco with the Blessed Metropolitan Philaret, whose official Glorification is planned, God willing, for the coming year.

As well, His Eminence, Bishop Silouan had an opportunity, before his departure, to deliver a significant lecture to the diocesan clergy and many of the faithful in Odessa, in the presence of the local Hierarchy, His Eminence, Bishop Agafangel, on the theology of resistance, which was followed by a constructive dialogue.

This visit demonstrated the disposition, on both sides, to deepen the blessed unity between our Sister Churches, for the gift of which we owe glory and thanksgiving to our Lord.

