

## Tonsures at the Protection Convent in Bluffton, Alberta, Canada

**ON THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION**, 2009, during an Arch-pastoral visit to the Convent of the Protection of the Mother of God in Bluffton, Alberta, Canada, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photike tonsured one of the sisterhood’s novices to the rank of Rasophore-nun and four of the nuns to the Great and Angelic Schema.

Bishop Auxentios, serving as a Priest, celebrated the Divine Liturgy with the aid of the convent’s *ephemerios* (serving Priest), Protopresbyter Gabriel Lee, who helped him in the Altar. His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos, was in prayerful attendance in the Altar, as well. At one of the Hours before Liturgy, the novice Martha was tonsured a Rasophore, with the name “Vasilissa.” During the Liturgy, Nuns Varsanofia, Nektaria, Paisia, and Alexandra were tonsured to the Great Schema, all retaining their former monastic names, save for Nun Alexandra, who was given the name “Mother Rafaela.” (*See, below, left to right, Mother Nektaria, Rasophore-Nun Vasilissa, Mother Varsanofia, Abbess Amvrosia, Mother Paisia, and Mother Rafaela.*)



The spiritual atmosphere of the moving services was enhanced by the beautiful wilderness surroundings of the historical Protection Convent—one of the oldest monastic communities established by the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad—situated in the birch and pine forests of the plains of Alberta, in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies.

The newly-tonsured nuns were honored with a festive meal in the convent refectory, following Liturgy, where His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos spoke for some time with the sisterhood regarding the spiritual life, reflecting, in part, on the teachings of his spiritual Father, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian.

The Protection Convent entered into the Synod in Resistance in 2007, shortly before the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad opened full communion with the Moscow Patriarchate. The convent's Abbess, the venerable Schema-Abbess Amvrosia, respectfully refused, for personal reasons of conscience, to accept the ROCA's union with Moscow. After studying the various traditionalist jurisdictions, and following much prayerful reflection, she and the sisterhood requested to be received into the American Exarchate of our Church, where they are considered a much-appreciated spiritual asset. (*Pictured below, all eight members of the convent sisterhood.*)

