

Ecclesiastical Pilgrimage to Italy



On Friday, February 12/25, 2011, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone, accompanied by His Grace, Bishop Klemes of Gardikion, travelled to the Monastery of St. Sera-



phim near the city of Pistoia, Italy, the See of His Eminence, Bishop Silvano of Luni, in order to take part in the annual meeting of the corporate entity of our Holy Synod's Exarchate in Italy, of which corporate entity Bishop Ambrose is a member.



On Saturday, February 13/26, the three Bishops had the opportunity to discuss current ecclesiastical matters of common interest. They then took a tour of the monastery (its various Chapels, Holy Relics, Trapeza, library, lecture hall, and outdoor areas), primarily for the sake of Bishop Klemes, whose first visit to Italy this was.

That afternoon, the Bishops went to the Church of the Holy Martyrs and Confessors of Orthodoxy of the Twentieth Century, in Pistoia,





for Great Vespers, which was served by Father Stefano Dell' Isola, who had arrived from Rome for the occasion. The Church's Rector, Father Daniele Marletta, was also in attendance.

On Meatfare Sunday, February 14/27, the three Bishops concelebrated at the Church in Pistoia. Bishop Silvano was the principal celebrant, assisted by Priests Daniele and Stefano and Hierodeacon Paolo, a brother of the Monastery of St. Seraphim. The choir chanted in Italian, Romanian, and Greek to Slavic melodies. Before the Divine Liturgy, Bishop Silvano tonsured Brother Adriano (twenty years old, a spiritual child of Father Stefano from Rome) a Reader.



After the reading from the Holy Gospel, Bishop Silvano kindly requested that Bishop Klemes deliver the homily.



The visiting Bishop spoke about the Mercy of the Truth and Love of Christ our Savior, which He poured forth upon us in humility during His First Coming, and which He continues to pour forth by means of His Holy Orthodox Church. That is, our Lord continues to nourish us with the Bread of Life and the Living Water of

His Word and Grace; to reconcile us with God the Father when we estrange ourselves from Him, and to clothe us in our original garment through repentance; to heal us of our infirmities; and to free us from the prison of our egotism and passions when we ask this of Him.

People, for their part, either rebel and distance themselves from Divine Truth and Love by means of sin and heresy—like the Prodigal Son of the previous Sunday—while maintaining the possibility of return and repentance; or else they remain within the Flock of the True Church, but usually go amiss with regard to love—like the elder brother of the Prodigal Son, who did not rejoice over the latter’s return, since he inwardly longed for satisfaction through a goat and not a sheep!

At His Second and Dread Coming, the Lord will come in glory to judge righteously, according to His mercy, where men should be assigned, and they will automatically be separated as sheep and goats. The righteous will be blessed, because they resembled Him in their lives: they fed, clothed, visited, and gave drink and hospitality to the sick and imprisoned; for in the person of the sick and imprisoned they recognized Christ Himself, having humility as a basis for their deeds of love. The sinners, on the other hand, who displayed none of the foregoing virtues, will be condemned. What is more, they will react against this judgment, thereby demonstrating even at that time their blindness, resulting from their egotistical hatred of mankind and God.

In whatever time we have left, let us hasten, by our deeds, to be counted among the sheep of Christ and not among the goats, that we might be declared blessed and not cursed!

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After the Divine Liturgy, which was attended by a large number of Orthodox Christians—primarily Italians and Romanians—a festal meal was served at the Monastery of St. Seraphim.

Bishop Ambrose then took part in the three-hour-long meeting of our Exarchate’s corporate entity, which was presided over by Bishop Silvano, with the participation of representatives from our various parishes and communities and also from other parts of Italy. A review of the past year’s proceedings was read, a financial report was presented, and various administrative matters were settled.

Late that afternoon, the two Bishops from Greece left with their Romanian brethren by road for Rome, where they visited the Romanian Old Calendar parish Church of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem.

On Monday, February 15/28, the two Bishops made a pilgrimages to the monuments of Christian Rome, including:

- the Basilica of St. Paul, outside the city walls, wherein lies the tomb of the Apostle to the Gentiles;

- the celebrated Catacombs of St. Callistos;
- the Basilica of St. John Lateran, which contains the skulls of the Chief Apostles, and the adjacent octagonal Chapel, in which the Relics of our own Saints, Cyprian and Justina, are preserved;
- the Basilica of the Holy Hieromartyr Clement, Bishop of Rome, which contains Relics of the Hieromartyr, and also the tomb of St. Cyril of Thessalonica, the Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of the Slavs;
- the ancient Basilica of St. Sabina, on the Aventine Hill, and the Basilica of Sts. Boniface and Aglaïa and of St. Alexis, the Man of God;
- the Basilica of St. Peter at the Vatican, wherein lies his tomb;
- the Basilica of the Holy Hieromartyr Laurence, which contains his Relics;
- the Church of Sts. Sylvester and Martin, Bishops of Rome;
- the Basilica of St. Praxeda, with Relics of Saints and the Chapel of St. Zeno, renowned for its exquisite mosaics; and
- the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, with its splendid adornments, both of ancient and more modern origin.



Father Ioan Dascalu (the Priest of the Romanian parish) and Father Stefano Dell' Isola (who speaks Greek), Rector of our small parish Church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (located in the center of Rome, at 43 Napoleon III St.), along with several of their parishioners, showed the

Bishops loving hospitality, courteously and reverently helping them in every possible way during their pilgrimage.

On Tuesday, February 16/ March 1, 2011, the two Bishops returned to Greece, giving thanks to our Lord for this latest great gift of His Divine Goodness.

