

Feast Day of the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess of Russia

ON MONDAY, JULY 5, 2011 (Old Style), the Convent of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess, in Etna, California, celebrated its annual Feast Day without the usual number of visitors, but in an atmosphere of festive joy. Among the small number of guests at the celebration were the clergy and several members of the small parish of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, in Etna; Matushka Agnieszka Ferens and her three daughters, from our Exarchate parish of Sts. Seraphim and John of Kronstadt, in San Diego, California; and Mr. Michael Klaassen from Fullerton, California.

The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated by His Grace, Bishop Auxentios of Photike, assisted by Archimandrite Akakios and Hierodeacons Nectarios and Photii, from the St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, also in Etna, as well as Father George Mavromatis, the married Priest who serves the convent. In prayerful attendance was Archbishop Chrysostomos, who communed but did not serve, owing to ill health. The convent choir chanted the Liturgy beautifully in English, Greek, and Slavonic. (*See below, the Great Entrance.*)



At the conclusion of the Liturgy, the Service of the Blessing of the Five Loaves, or Ἀρτοκλασία (*Artoklasia*), was chanted. The faithful were then invited to venerate a portion of the Relics of St. Elizabeth the Grand Duchess—a fragment of her finger—which was a gift to Archbishop Chrysostomos and the convent from the late Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles (Russian Orthodox Church Abroad), by way of Protopresbyter Dr. James Thornton, then a clergyman in the ROCA and now Rector of our Exarchate parish of the Holy Trinity in Oxnard, California.

A procession following the Liturgy was not held this year, given the unusually cold July weather, with winds and rain. The services were followed by a fasting luncheon for the guests, served by the nuns in the convent *Trapeza* (Refectory). (*See the sisterhood, below.*)

