

## Abbess Seraphima (1913-2004)

A Contemporary Great Righteous and God-loving *Amma* in Christ

On the Eve of All Saints, 2004, a virtual giant of the Orthodox resistance, Mother Seraphima, the revered Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Protection of the Mother of God, in the Knyazhevo district of Sofia, Bulgaria, reposed after a short illness of little more than one day. Mother Seraphima (Liven), 90, was born in Moscow on November 16, 1913, into a prominent Russian family.

A spiritual daughter, from her youth, of St. Seraphim (Sobolev), the Wonder-Worker of Sofia, she served the convent in Sofia—which was established by St. Seraphim—for more than fifty years, with her labors of prayer, faith, and patience. With graceful magnanimity, Matushka comforted and warmed countless souls. Her saintly and wise counsel was the source of comfort and spiritual benefit to an entire generation of Orthodox émigrés from Russia and for Faithful in Bulgaria and, quite literally, throughout the Balkans. To her nuns, she was a beloved *Amma*.

When, in 1968, the Church of Bulgaria adopted the New Calendar, four Hieromonks—including two professors of the Theological Academy in Sofia, Archimandrites Seraphim and Sergius—resisted the innovation and, facing persecution from the Communist government and the Bulgarian Patriarchate, took refuge at the Protection Convent. Thus, the indefatigable Abbess Seraphima and her nuns, now numbering more than sixty, played a pivotal rôle, at tremendous risk and sacrifice, in preserving traditional Orthodoxy in Bulgaria. For these efforts, no less a figure than the great Serbian Confessor, the Blessed Archimandrite Justin (Popović), hearing of the persecution of the Bulgarian Old Calendarists, heartily commended them.

In 1988, one of Mother Seraphima's spiritual children, the First Hi-



erarch of the Old Calendar Orthodox Church of Bulgaria, Bishop Photii of Triaditza—then an assistant professor at the University of Sofia and a graduate of the Theological Academy—was secretly Ordained a Priest by Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, whom, in Bishop Photii’s words, the Bulgarian traditionalists knew for his “moderation, his...gentleness, [and] his love for the works of the Holy Fathers.” In 1993, with the fall of Communism, Bishop Photii was Consecrated a Bishop, much to the joy of Mother Seraphima, who continued her service to the Church in assisting him. Her sad loss, for the whole of True Orthodoxy, is immeasurable. Memory Eternal!

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