

Building a shrine
Roseville church to be presented with rare gift

By: Paul Cambra, Special to The Press-Tribune
Wednesday, July 20, 2005 10:11
AM PDT

On the corner of East Roseville Parkway and Stone Canyon Drive a construction crew busily prepares the grounds for an upcoming celebration.

After years of planning, the faithful of St. Anna Greek Orthodox Church are finally seeing their dreams of a new church realized.

Amidst the clamor of bulldozers and excavators, an added sense of excitement hovers about the site.

Sunday, the eve of the feast day of their Matron Saint, a relic of St. Anna will be formally presented to the Roseville church.

This myrrh bearing, quarter-sized piece of the St. Anna's skull will turn the small church into the "Shrine of St. Anna."

St. Anna lived in the days before Christ. Married at age 19 and childless for some 50 years, she and her husband Joachim were blessed late in life with a daughter, Mary.

Sometime after Anna's death at age 79, Mary gave birth to Jesus.

A short time after his crucifixion, Anna's relics were collected and venerated, a common practice among early Christians.

Her relics became the possession of the Church of Jerusalem. Through the years, pieces have been gifted to the Patriarchal Center in Antioch, a Catholic Church in Germany, and a monastery on Mt. Athos in Greece.

And now, through the generosity of the monks on that mountain in Greece, a piece of Jesus' grandmother will reside on this small hillside in Roseville.

St. Anna will be just the second Orthodox church on the West Coast (joining St. Nectarios in Covina) to be considered a shrine to their patron or matron, St. Anna.

"This is a gift beyond measure for our young community, a gift that will bring St. Anna's blessings and intercessions physically into our midst," said Father Christopher Flesoras, St. Anna's pastor.

While attending the funeral of Bishop Anthony earlier this year in San Francisco, Father Cheroubim



Special to THE PRESS-TRIBUNE Father Christopher Flesoras, left, pastor of St. Anna's, and Father Cheroubim Apostolou, head of a monastic community on Mt. Athos in Greece, worked together to bring a relic of St. Anna, Jesus' grandmother, to Roseville. The relic will be formally presented Sunday.

Apostolou, head of its monastic community, met Father Christopher.

It was brought up that Roseville had the only Greek church bearing the name of St. Anna in the United States.

After days of contemplation, Father Cheroubim decided to gift a piece of the St. Anna relic to the Roseville parish.

Overjoyed, Father Christopher remained in constant dialogue with Father Cheroubim via e-mail, culminating in a February trip to the Skete of St. Anna in Greece.

Joining him on his journey were his father, Dean Flesoras, and father-in-law, Jim Kyriazis.

Accessible primarily by boat, the three needed to ascend 2,000 steps to complete the final leg of the trip to the monastery on Mt. Athos, which is situated 500 meters high on cliffs overlooking the sea, and is the home to 120 monks.

While at the monastery, the visitors from Roseville were able to view the true treasures of the Skete, some 20 sterling silver cases, each possessing the holy relic of a saint, martyr or church father.

Founded in Scripture, some of the relics date back to the earliest days of Christianity.

"Even if we were to demystify the experience, the relic that sat before us was a product of an age long since passed," Kyriazis said. "Some 2,000 years have passed since she walked upon the earth."

Currently worshipping in an office complex on North Sunrise Avenue in Roseville, St. Anna's new home for an estimated 170 families will be on 4½ acres and include a house of worship, administrative offices, a great hall, a fellowship hall and classrooms for a parochial school.

Father Cheroubim will be in attendance at the formal gifting Sunday, along with Orthodox and non-Orthodox clergy, plus an estimated 500 people from throughout Northern California.

For more information on the gifting ceremony, call 772-9372.