

Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina
Fili, Attika

Thanksgiving 2007

In honor of our Most Reverend Father,
Metropolitan Cyprian

PROGRAM

Part I →

Byzantine Choir

1. – “We Shall Joyfully Meet.” Second Tone. A hymn of welcome.
2. – Entrance of our Most Reverend Father, Metropolitan Cyprian.
3. – *“Eis polla ete, Despota.”*
4. – *Apolytikion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina. Third Tone.
5. – Verses from the Great Doxology. Plagal of the Second Tone. By Georgios Biolakes
6. – *First stasis of the Typika.* Plagal of the Fourth Tone.
7. – *Festal Encomia. Prosoimoia* in the Plagal of the First Tone.
Acrostic in Greek: “Rejoice, O Father!”



Part II →

Address – “Message of Gratitude” – Gift

1. – Festal Address:
“Virginity in Christ as a Way of Life in Today’s World.”
2. – “Message of Gratitude” On behalf of the spiritual children of Metropolitan Cyprian among the laity
3. – Offering of a gift to our Most Reverend Father Cyprian :
“*The Apparition of the Theotokos to St. Seraphim of Sarov*”

Part III →

“Hellenorthódoxe Kleronomiá” Chorus and Instrumental Ensemble

1. - “A Prayer to the *Theotokos* for our missionary work.”
2. – Instrumental dance melody from Crete.
3. – Serenade of Stergia
4. – “My little Bird, where did you flee?” Folk song of Epiros.
5. – Instrumental melody from Argos
6. – “Welcome light rain.” Folk melody. Verses for autumn.

Part IV →

Narration

- The Apparition of the *Theotokos* to St. Seraphim of Sarov.
Narrated by Professor Onouphrios Sochos.

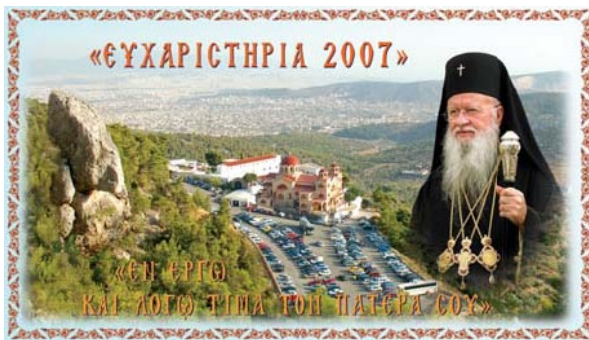
Part V →

Concluding Proceedings

1. – Closing remarks
2. – *Polychronion*. Second Tone.
3. – Distribution of treats and mementoes
4. – “*Through the prayers of our holy Fathers...*”



The End,
and to God be
glory and thanksgiving.



“Thanksgiving 2007”

Part I

1. – “We shall joyfully meet.”
2. – Entrance of our Most Reverend Father.
3. – “*Eis polla eti, Despota.*”
4. – *Apolytikion.*

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

Holy Hierarchs, Reverend Fathers and Mothers, beloved Brothers and sisters in Christ:

It is with particular joy and gratitude that we welcome you once again to our “Thanksgiving” celebration.

These celebrations were inaugurated in 1976 by our Brotherhood in honor of the Nameday of our spiritual Father and Abbot, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Fili, First Hierarchy of the Holy Synod in Resistance.

We thank you most warmly because by your presence here this evening, you honor not only our Much-Revered Elder, Guide, Father, and Metropolitan, but also the Brotherhood of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.

We earnestly call upon the fervent protection of the *Theotokos* and of our Saints, and also on your prayers, for the success of our program, which our choir opened with the hymn of welcome, “We shall joyfully meet,” in the Second Tone and the *Apolytikion* of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.

We will follow with verses from the Great Doxology, in the Plagal of the Second Tone (largetto), by Georgios Biolakes.

5. – *Verses from the Doxology.*

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

This Thanksgiving celebration—our yearly Nameday tribute—is a feast of gratitude to our Lord and God, a feast of thanksgiving; for He has granted us to have such an affectionate Father, our Most Reverend Metropolitan Cyprian!

The first stasis of the *Typika*, which our choir will now chant in the plagal of the fourth tone, perfectly expresses the thankful and doxologizing nature of our celebration.

6. – First *stasis* of the *Typika*. Plagal of the Fourth Tone.

BLESS the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me, bless His holy Name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all that He hath done for thee,
Who is gracious unto all thine iniquities,
Who healeth all thine infirmities,
Who redeemeth thy life from corruption,
Who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion,
Who fulfilleth thy desire with good things;
thy youth shall be renewed as the eagle's.
The Lord performeth deeds of mercy,
and executeth judgment for all them that are wronged.
He hath made His ways known unto Moses,
unto the sons of Israel the things that He hath willed.
Compassionate and merciful is the Lord,
long-suffering and plenteous in mercy; not unto the
end will He be angered, neither unto eternity will He be wroth.
Not according to our iniquities hath He dealt with us,
neither according to our sins hath He rewarded us.
For according to the height of heaven from the earth,
the Lord hath made His mercy to prevail
over them that fear Him.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far hath He removed our iniquities from us.
Like as a father hath compassion upon his sons,
so hath the Lord had compassion upon them that fear Him;
for He knoweth whereof we are made,
He hath remembered that we are dust.
As for man, his days are as the grass;
as a flower of the field, so shall he blossom forth.
For when the wind is passed over it,
then it shall be gone, and no longer will it know the place thereof.

But the mercy of the Lord is from eternity,
 even unto eternity, upon them that fear Him.
And His righteousness is upon sons of sons,
 upon them that keep His testament
 and remember His commandments to do them.
The Lord in Heaven hath prepared His throne,
 and His kingdom ruleth over all.
Bless the Lord, all ye His angels,
 mighty in strength, that perform His word,
 to hear the voice of His words.
Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts,
 His ministers that do His will.
Bless the Lord, all ye His works,
 in every place of His dominion.
 Bless the Lord, O my soul.

• **Master of Ceremonies:**

We follow with eleven new Festal Encomia in the Plagal of the First Tone.

These new constitute yet another composition and yet another humble offering on behalf of our Brotherhood to our Most Reverend Father and Metropolitan, and particularly for this evening's "Thanksgiving" celebration.

We note that the acrostic of these encomia (that is, the first letters of the eleven *Prosomoia*, spell out in Greek the greeting "O Father, Rejoice!")

7. – *Festal Encomia.*

Prosomoia in the Plagal of the First Tone
Original acrostic: "O Father, Rejoice!"

O Shepherd and Father,
as we celebrate thy Nameday,
we entreat the Master of all on thy behalf.

Bless now thy children paternally,
O Shepherd, and wholeheartedly pray
that they keep thy counsels with precision.

Speedily dispel by Thy radiance, O Savior,
all despondency from the heart of our Father,
and infuse it with joy past comprehension.

By the prayers of thy children,
O Father, may Christ grant thee a long life,
in peace and constant joy.

May the Lord place thee, O Father,
in the light and glory of the Heavenly Tabernacles,
wherein are the choirs of all the Righteous.

Strength and health fail not to grant to our Father,
O Thou Who lovest mankind,
that he may ever offer Thee glory!

Rejoice, O multitude of Holy Angels,
and illumine by your rays all those
who seek the blessing of our Father.

O Venerable Martyr Cyprian,
we extol thy struggles, and
beseech thee to fulfill the desires of our Father!

O Martyr and modest virgin Justina,
we fall down before thee, praying
with faith, grant well-being to our Father!

Glory.

By streams of spiritual gifts,
O Holy Trinity, water the heart of our Father,
and save us through his prayers!

Both now.

Grant peace, O Maiden,
to the heart of our Shepherd,
inflaming it with Divine love for Christ, now and forever!



Part II

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank our Byzantine Choir, for preparing us, so that, by the Grace of prayer, we might be able to address that which is to follow.

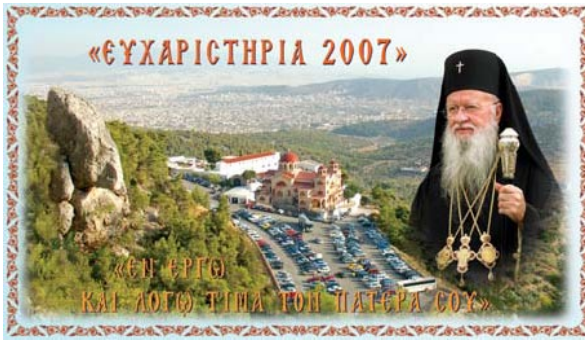
This year, we have chosen virginity as the theme of our customary festal address.

This truly Angelic virtue is widely misunderstood, even to the point of being incomprehensible in our difficult age.

I invite His Grace, Bishop Ambrose to come to the podium to help us to address “Virginity in Christ as a Way of Life in Today’s World.”

1. – Speaker. Panegyric.





“Thanksgiving 2007”

Virginitv in Christ as a Way of Life in Today’s World

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan and Revered Spiritual Father,
Holy Hierarchs, Reverend Fathers and Mothers,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:*

IBEGAN writing the address for this evening’s tribute around two months ago, while staying at the Convent of Diveyevo—the women’s cœnobia founded in Russia by St. Seraphim of Sarov.

There, I noticed that, by the order of the All-Holy Virgin herself, St. Seraphim had separated the nuns into two neighboring, but separate, cœnobia: one for virgins and one for widows. I also noticed that the *Panagia’s* trench—along which, according to a tradition of St. Seraphim, the Mother of god walks once a day—encircles only the portion of the Convent exclusively set aside for virgin nuns.

What then, is the reason for this distinction? Why has this special blessing been bestowed on the virgin nuns? This is the thought with which I would like to introduce the theme of this evening’s address on virginitv in Christ.

* * *

WE COULD maintain that, in this day and age, even though all of the Christian virtues are antithetical to the spirit of the world, nevertheless none other is so antithetical to it as is virginitv. In an era in which everything pushes man, even from an early age, towards the enjoyment of carnal pleasures, virginitv seems to the worldly person like something alien and strange: rather like something to be completely avoided. For this reason, virginitv has a much greater reward in our days than it did in previous generations, when it was

something natural and obvious, honored by all.

However, this gives rise to a legitimate question: Why does virginity enjoy such exceeding honor from Orthodox Tradition—from all of the Fathers of the Church? For that matter, it is noteworthy that one of the most beautiful laudations of virginity, among the many written by the God-bearing Fathers, is that by St. Gregory of Nyssa, who was himself married! Before examining this issue, however, we need to make a few parenthetical comments.

* * *

BEING Orthodox Christians, by God’s mercy, for us it goes without saying that virginity acquires its value, and is precious, only when it is kept for Christ’s sake and out of love for him. In and of itself, as a simple way of life, not only is it of no value, but even the contrary is true; for it is probably prompted by self-love, egocentrism, and pride. St. Catherine, for example, was a virgin even before she came to believe in Christ. Nevertheless, as we know from her Life, Christ reckoned her virginity unclean, and therefore unacceptable, and certainly not a virtue. But after her conversion and Baptism, Christ vouchsafed her mystically to unite with Him.

The Saint thereby demonstrates to us that there is within the Christian a need, in a manner of speaking, for a more profound wedding—that is, spiritual union with the “other”—, and that the soul that remains without this spiritual union also remains spiritually fruitless and sterile. Precisely herein lies the great difference between married life and a life of virginity; for, although the former is blessed by God, since it constitutes a secure framework for working out one’s salvation, yet in the latter case the soul attains direct union with Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Simply keeping one’s virginity—which has truly always been difficult to achieve, and especially so in our own age—remains on the level of a mere personal choice, when it is not virginity in Christ; that is, when it does not have in view a mystical union with Christ. Only in the case in which virginity is with Christ, and in Christ, does one fulfill the truth that, whereas married life is certainly honorable and blessed, virginity is far loftier; it is unfathomable. We then understand why Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers extol and laud, with lofty encomia and praises, the virtue of virginity.

* * *

VIRGINITY is defined as a renunciation of one of the natural functions of the body, and indeed the one which, more than any other, draws man, body and soul, to the earthly. Though it is true that one more easily liberates himself from carnal passions than from passions of the soul, nevertheless carnal passion is the one passion from the influence of which almost no one is free, and against which every struggling Christian is constantly obliged to battle.

Great is the struggle, but immense is the reward. Even the science of psychology admits, today, that, by means of continence, the powers that, another

instance, would be consumed in sexual activity are deployed elsewhere; that is, the continent person has more mental and bodily powers for achievements, struggles, and inspiration.

Upon hearing the word “virgin,” the mind of every Christian turns directly to the Most Holy *Theotokos*, who is the model and succor of every person endeavoring to live a life of purity—unequaled and beyond every human attainment though her example may be. We might also add that, when we hear the word “virgin,” we mostly think of the female sex. Why? I believe this is because, though the virtue of purity adorns every person, it nevertheless more particularly adorns the woman.

We all must know examples of this, but I can confess that, for our Most Reverend Father no less than for all of us who knew her personally, the ever-memorable Mother Kypriane was an unparalleled example of purity. Whoever had the blessing of knowing her will understand what I mean. And I hope that we will have another opportunity to speak about this sanctified personality, this earthly Angel of the Convent of the Holy Angels. The most saintly Mother Kypriane put into practice, in her life, the counsel of St. Clement of Rome:

“One who is pure in body should not become conceited, keeping in mind that it is Another Who grants him this continence.”

In other words, the ever-memorable Abbess always made sure to safeguard virginity with humility.

* * *

PURSUING this thought, I would like to stress that the parable of the ten virgins in the Gospel makes it abundantly clear to us that virginity and purity of soul are jeopardized not only by carnal passion, but also by every other spiritual passion. With regard to this, St. John Chrysostomos writes:

“One who says that he is a virgin in body, but who envies his brother in spirit, is not a virgin; and again, the vainglorious man is not a virgin.”

That is to say, just as with every virtue, so also with virginity, there is danger of pride, which provokes disdain for others, who are supposedly unclean.

A person conquered by this dangerous pride seems to forget, however, that the greatest impurity of soul is caused by pride rather than by any other passion.

All of the Fathers inform us about this danger. As St. John Chrysostomos writes again:

“A virgin must not be one in body only, but also in soul, if he is to receive the Holy Bridegroom.”

Only with genuine and unfeigned humility is it possible for virginity in Christ to be preserved immaculate, so that the person might be completely sanctified, in both body and soul.

For the virgin soul to be perfected, however, it does not suffice to preserve it undefiled from carnal and spiritual passions; indeed, it is also imperative that it unite with the only Virgin, All-Blameless, and All-Pure Bridegroom, our Savior Jesus Christ.

St. Nectarios writes with much grace:

“The virgin who has loved Christ, has desired Him as a Bridegroom, has dedicated herself to Him, and who lives for Him, no longer lives for herself, but Christ lives in her. She is crucified, buried, and resurrected with Him; she converses with Him and gazes at Him; lifts her soul to Him; and elevates her heart and mind to Him....”

It is then that the virgin soul accomplishes its Mystical Wedding with Christ, the Bridegroom; it is then that we have the great miracle of virginity in Christ.

* * *

WE HAVE already given some answers to our initial question, as to why the New Testament and all of the Fathers of the Church so greatly praise virginity. If, however, we turn back to the Old Testament, it is remarkable that nowhere is virginity considered to be a virtue. As the great devotee of virginity, St. John Chrysostomos, says in this regard:

“Do not imagine the magnitude of virginity to be small. Virginity is such that none of those of old were able to preserve it.”

The Grace of the teaching of the Incarnate Word of God, however, completes the Law of the Old Testament. Thus, for the first time, virginity is set forth in the New Testament as a virtuous way of life. It is noteworthy, indeed, that, in the *Revelation*, the Holy Apostle John the Theologian distinguishes virgins as an especially glorious order of the saved:

“These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.... These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are faultless.”

Virginity in Christ, being a free and voluntary choice to which the Church exhorts us, without ever imposing it on us, also resembles the monastic life; though it is not completely identical to it. There are saintly monastics who come from married life, and there are others—more rarely—who were sanctified by a life of virginity in the world. Virginity, like monasticism, is an invitation of honor addressed to few. Moreover, it is truly astonishing that the Lord, Who orders us to accept even death for His Name’s sake, nowhere, at no time, and of no one demands virginity, as St. John Chrysostomos again gracefully writes:

“For virginity is so great a thing, that Christ, having coming down

from Heaven, was never so bold as to impose it; He decreed that we die [for His sake] and do good to our enemies, but virginity He did not decree.”

Consequently, virginity, as a voluntary sacrifice for God’s sake, brings more Grace to the one who practices it than do the other, universal commandments of God, which every believer must put into practice in his life.

* * *

WE WOULD, however, need not only the gift of St. John Chrysostomos, but also a good deal of time, simply to touch on the grace and glory of virginity in Christ, which is why we have only superficially approached this great mystery of life in Christ, into which mystery our Most Reverend Father and Metropolitan was, and continues to be, our enlightened and discerning initiator.

The glorious Virgin-Martyr Justina, one of the Patron Saints of our monastery, has always been for us, and for every believer, a shining landmark on our journey to the summits of purity and virginity.

Let us not forget her example, or the power of her intercessions; for, apart from other things, she belongs to the choir of virgins surrounding the All-Immaculate and All-Blameless *Theotokos* and Mother of God. The foundation of our monastery—and, of course, of other monasteries—cannot be reckoned fortuitous in this critical age, when the vision of virginity is liable to be completely forgotten. Glory to God, through our Saints and their monastery, a pious longing for virginity and mystical union with Christ has been reignited there, for nearly forty-five years, in the souls of many chosen ones. We are filled with joy and emotion every time we have the especial blessing of wiping the perspiring brows of our youth, who courageously struggle to remain pure, for the love of Christ, within the furnace of the temptations of this world.

May the Most Blessed *Theotokos* and Sts. Cyprian and Justina strengthen, to the end, our much-revered spiritual Father, granting him length of days and vouchsafing him Heavenly bliss, just as he has vouchsafed us, through his prayers, to taste of this bliss of virginity in Christ.

Eis polla ete, Despota! Many Years, Master!

I thank you.



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank His Grace, Bishop Ambrose for helping us, in a simple and understandable way, to approach the inexhaustible theme of Angelic virginity and purity.

We also thank him because he has reminded us that we have a strong ally in this feat: St. Justina, who is the Patron of our monastery, together with St. Cyprian.

* * *

But our program continues.

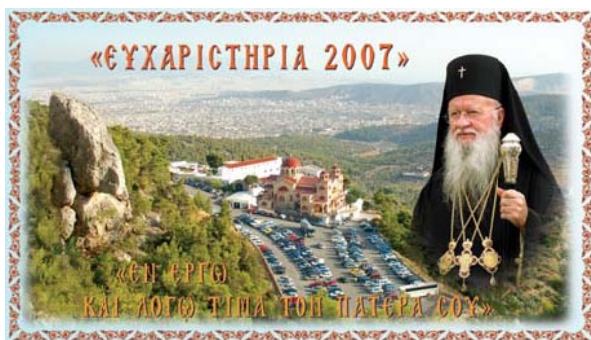
Our lay brethren in Christ, who belong to our extended family of the Brotherhood of St. Cyprian, would also like, as always, to participate in their own way in this evening's joy.

A "Message of Gratitude" to our Most Reverend Father on their behalf is certainly welcome and assuredly within the framework of our "Thanksgiving" celebrations.

I invite our beloved Mr. Georgios Korres, a veteran member of the lay community of our monastery, to come to the podium.

2. – *Message of Gratitude.*





“Thanksgiving 2007”

A Message of Gratitude
on behalf of the spiritual children among the laity
(October 8, 2007)

*Our Most Reverend Metropolitan,
and Much-Revered spiritual Father:*

I call upon your holy prayers, that I might be granted to represent with worthiness our monastery’s extended family, which has entrusted me with conveying to you its pious feelings towards your venerable person at this evening’s celebration.

■ This year’s “Thanksgiving” celebration is veritably bathed in the light of the joy of the Resurrection.

■ Your Nameday, combined with the first Feast Day in our monastery’s splendid new Cathedral and with the Consecrations of our two new Hierarchs—our beloved Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi and Bishop Klemes of Gardiki-on—is filled with unprecedented joy, rejoicing, thanksgiving, and doxology.

■ We all feel that we are celebrating a spiritual spring and are enjoying the heavenly fragrance from those blessed flowers that *you* have planted, *you* have cared for, and *you* have paternally protected.

■ We thank you most warmly, because Your Eminence has vouchsafed us a foretaste of the bliss of Eternal Spring and the fragrance of the Holy Spirit.

Our Most Reverend Metropolitan:

The **Monastery** of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, of which, by Divine Providence, you are the founder, has already left its seal on the contemporary history of the Orthodox Church and also, more generally, on our homeland.

- The authenticity of your message has had a positive and renewing influence on innumerable souls, even beyond the narrow boundaries of Greece.
- The experience of purity in Christ—in both its narrow and wider sense—has resurrected souls and purified lives, and even for those who are weakest spiritually, it constitutes a vision of hope, an anchor of hope, in the turbulent sea of their struggle.

* * *

Our Most Reverend Elder and spiritual Father:

There are no words to express the torrent of our feelings of love and gratitude, as much to your venerable person as to your holy monastery, for all that you have offered us with such sincerity and generosity, and with so many sacrifices.

- We wish you strength and length of days, an increase of the fragrant flowers in the blessed Garden of your monastery—indeed, our monastery—and the fulfillment of your every pious desire, to the glory of God.

"Eis polla ete, Despota!"



- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We warmly thank our beloved brother in Christ, Mr. Georgios Korres, who has transported us, in a succinct and concise manner, to the truly vernal atmosphere of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

The time has come to offer to our Most Reverend Metropolitan our traditional gift.

As always, it is the fruit of many months of labor by our Icon Studio and the result of a joint effort by our Brotherhood.

It is, as always, directly linked to the theme of this year's celebration, "virginity in Christ."

We invite His Grace, Bishop Klemes to present the gift.

3. – *Presentation and offering of gift.*

The Apparition of the Theotokos to St. Seraphim of Sarov



• *Dimensions: 68 X 100 cm.* •

Part III

• Master of Ceremonies:

We have already arrived, with God's help, at the third part of our program.

The "Hellenorthodoxe Kleronomiá" chorus and instrumental ensemble, will, as it does every year, perform folk songs and instrumental pieces for us.

One of the essential features of our Holy Synod is its missionary work. This work is enormous and extensive; we must, therefore pray for it.

The "Hellenorthodoxe Kleronomiá" ensemble will present us with a "Prayer to the *Theotokos* for our missionary work," written by our Brotherhood. Our sister in Christ Maria Giatrakou will first recite this prayer.

1. – "Prayer to *Theotokos* for our missionary work"

**Bless, O All-Immaculate One, the labors of thy children,
and multiply their firstfruits, to the glory of thy Son!**



**May the seed of Truth take root in the furrows,
and may hearts blossom forth the Grace that unites!**



**Strengthen our zeal, that with fervor and love
we might cast our nets to the ends of the earth!**



**May we become Apostles to the East and to the West,
that the spring of the Grace of our Lord might flow!**



**May the waters of Orthodoxy, without innovations,
ceaselessly irrigate the hearts of man!**



**May the message of godly resistance be heard unceasingly,
and our Metropolitan inexpressibly rejoice!**



**May the lilies of our Monastery, the God-inspired Cyprian
and the Divine Justina, rejoice in the Heavens!**



**May the Uncreated Light of the Holy Trinity
draw the people to knowledge of the Truth!**



**Bless, O Most Immaculate One, the labors of thy children,
and multiply their firstfruits to the glory of thy Son!**

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We continue with instrumental dance music from Crete.

2. – *Instrumental pieces from Crete.*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

A Stergian Serenade.

3. – Serenade.

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We will now hear a beautiful folk song of Epiros: “My little bird, where did you flee?” It speaks symbolically about the value of freedom.

4. – *“My little bird, where did you flee?”*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

Instrumental music from Argos

5 – *Instrumental music.*

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

We will close the musical portion of our program with a folk melody: autumn verses, entitled, “Welcome, light rain.”

We would like to take the opportunity to warmly thank our “Hellen-orthodoxe Kleronomiá” chorus and instrumental ensemble, which was established by, and operates under the auspices of, the Holy Metropolis of Oropos and Fili.

Its presence at our various gatherings constitutes a spiritual witness and, at the same time, contributes to the revival and continuation of our fragrant cultural tradition.



Part IV

- **Master of Ceremonies:**

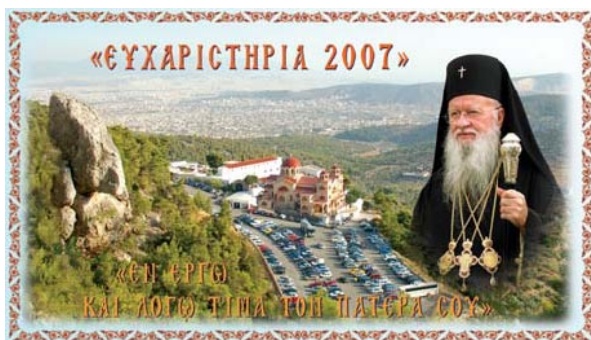
In the fourth part of our celebration, we will be witnesses of the “Apparition of the *Theotokos* to St. Seraphim of Sarov.

A short while earlier, in the gift to the Metropolitan, we saw an artistic rendition of this vision—this astonishing visitation of the *Theotokos*.

I ask our beloved and honorable Professor Onouphrios Sochos to bring this momentous vision to life for us.

1. – *Narration by Onouphrios Sochos.* — [*Video presentation*](#) (in Greek)





Thanksgiving 2007

The Apparition of the *Theotokos* to St. Seraphim

EARLY in the morning of March 25, 1831, one year and ten months before his repose, St. Seraphim was granted a visitation by the Mother of God.

* * *

“Father told me two days in advance to come to him on that day,” recounts Mother Eyraxia of the Diveyevo Convent. “When I came, Father announced: ‘We shall have a vision of the Mother of God,’ and, making me bend to the ground, he covered me with his mandia and read over me out of a book. Then, lifting me up, he said: ‘Now hold on to me and do not be afraid of anything.’”

“At that moment there was a sound like the noise of a forest in a strong gale. When it subsided, we heard harmonic chanting. Then the door of the cell opened of itself, it became light—brighter than day—, and the cell was filled with a fragrance like that of rose-scented incense, only better.

Batiushka was kneeling with his hands raised to Heaven. I was terrified. Father stood up and said:

‘Do not be afraid, my child. This is nothing demonic. It is being granted to us by the mercy of God. Here is our Most Glorious, All-Pure Lady, the Most Holy Mother of God coming to us!’

“Two Angels were walking in front, holding branches—one in his right hand and the other in his left—which were just bursting into blossom. Their hair looked like golden flax and lay on their shoulders. They stood in

front. They were followed by St. John the Baptist and St. John the Theologian. Their garments were white and radiant. After them came the Mother of God, who was followed by twelve virgins.

“The Queen of Heaven was wearing a mandia similar to the one painted on the Icon ‘The Joy of All who Sorrow.’ It was a radiant mandia, of inexpressible beauty, though I cannot say what color it was. It was fastened under her neck by a large, round clasp studded with Crosses variously adorned, but with what I do not know. I only remember that it shone with an extraordinary brightness. Under her mandia, she wore a green dress, girded high up by a belt. She also wore a kind of *epitrachelion*, and on her wrists were cuffs which, like the *epitrachelion*, were covered with Crosses. She seemed taller than all the virgins. On her head was a high crown, also adorned with Crosses. It shone with such light that one’s eyes could not meet it; nor could I look at the clasp or her face. Her hair lay on her shoulders and was longer and more beautiful than that of the Angels.

“The virgins came after her in pairs. They wore crowns and garments of various colors. They were of different statures, and their faces were also different, as was their hair which lay on their shoulders. All were of great beauty, but some were more beautiful than others. They stood around us all. The Queen of Heaven was in the middle.

“The cell became spacious; it was full of light, but a light that was brighter and whiter than sunlight. I was terrified and fell down.

* * *

“Our Lady came up to me and, touching me with her right hand, said: ‘Stand up, Sister, and do not be afraid. With me have come virgins like you.’

“I did not understand how I stood up. The Queen of Heaven repeated: ‘Do not be afraid. We have come to visit you.’

“Father Seraphim had already stood up before the Most Holy *Theotokos*, and she was speaking to him so naturally and with such familiarity, as if he were one of her own.

“Filled with great joy, I asked Father Seraphim: ‘Where are we? Who are they?’ I thought I was no longer alive. The *Theotokos* spoke to me and said: ‘Approach the virgins and ask them yourself.’

“I approached. In the first row were the Great Martyrs Barbara and Catherine. In the second, the Protomartyr Thekla and the Great Martyr Marina. In the third row were Sts. Irene and Evpraxia. In the fourth, the Great Martyrs Pelagia and Dorothea. Behind them were St. Makrina and

the Martyr Justina. Lastly followed the Great Martyr Juliana and the Martyr Anysia.

“I approached them in order, one by one. They told me their names and described, as in the Synaxarion, their lives and the martyrdoms they had undergone for Christ’s sake. They then said: ‘God did not grant us this glory for nothing, but for our suffering. You will suffer, too.’

* * *

“The Most Holy *Theotokos* said much to Father Seraphim. Although I took part in this vision, I could not hear what they said. I only heard the following: ‘Do not leave my virgins’ (the Diveyevo Sisters).

“O my Lady!’ the Staretz replied. ‘I gather them, but I cannot direct them by myself.’

“I will help you in everything. Teach them obedience. If they keep it, they will be with you and near me. Otherwise, they will be deprived of their lot among these virgins, who are closest to me. They will enjoy neither such a place, nor such a crown. Whoever offends them will be punished by me. And whoever serves them for the Lord’s sake will find mercy before Him.’

* * *

“Then the *Panagia* turned to me. ‘So,’ she said, ‘look at these virgins of mine and at their crowns. Some of them left an earthly kingdom and riches for the Heavenly Kingdom. They all loved voluntary poverty; they loved the Lord alone, and this is why you see what glory and honour they have been vouchsafed. Just as the Martyrs of old suffered, so do those of today. Only, the former Martyrs suffered openly, whereas the present ones do so secretly, through heartfelt sorrows. Their reward, however, will be the same.’

* * *

“Turning to the Staretz, the Most Holy *Theotokos* blessed him and said: ‘Soon, my beloved, you will be with us!’ They bade each other farewell, as also did all of the Saints. St. John the Baptist and St. John the Theologian blessed him, while the virgins shook his hand. Someone then turned to me and said:

“You were vouchsafed this vision through the prayers of Fathers Seraphim, Mark, Nazarios and Pachomios.’

* * *

“Suddenly, everything vanished. The vision was over. It had lasted under an hour.

“‘You see, Sister,’ Batiushka remarked to me, ‘what Grace the Lord has granted us lowly ones to enjoy. This is the twelfth time that I have been granted such a vision. And now the Lord has granted it to you! What joy we have been given! We may have our faith and hope in the Lord. Conquer our enemy, the Devil, and always live in chastity. The Lord will help you in everything. Call to your help the Lord, the *Theotokos*, and the Saints, and remember me, the lowly one. Say in your prayers: ‘O Lord, what will the time of my death be like? Lord, how will I approach the dread judgement? What answer shall I give for my deeds? Queen of Heaven, help me!’”



Part V

• Master of Ceremonies:

We sincerely thank Professor Onouphrios Sochos for his charismatic delivery of this most compunctious Visit of the *Theotokos* to St. Seraphim

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By the Grace of our Lord and with the help of our Patron Saints, Cyprian and Justina, our program has reached its conclusion.

Our monastic Brotherhood addresses once more its warm and heartfelt thanks to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have honored us again this year with their presence.

We especially thank the holy Hierarchs—both those present and those who have already returned to their homelands—who have come again this year from various countries abroad (Romania, Bulgaria, America, South Ossetia, Italy, and Sweden) and who were individually mentioned during the Feast Day of our monastery.

We express our most particular and sincerest thanks to His Eminence, Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna in California, who, despite the grave dangers posed by his many illnesses, traveled by sea and land for many days, in order to be present in time for the celebration of our monastery!

His Eminence's health does not permit him to travel by air; thus he is obligated to be subjected to a second hardship in returning to America to return to his See, once again after many days!

We also thank all of the clergy, monks, and nuns present here this evening, who represent our parishes and monastic brotherhoods both in Greece and abroad.

We also express our heartfelt gratitude to the Sisterhood of the Convent of the Holy Angels, which—in addition to other things—has labored on the translation work for the simultaneous rendition of this evening's celebration into English, Italian, and Russian, so that it could be followed by our visitors from abroad.

We must also not forget, of course, to thank the worthy political dignitaries in attendance this evening for the support that they have given us up to the present time, and we urge them to continue their support, so that, in their own way, they also may contribute to the peaceful cooperation of peoples.

We especially thank [political dignitaries present at the Tribute were here named].

Finally, we once again thank all of those who have honored our “Thanksgiving” celebration with their presence on the Nameday of our Most Reverend spiritual Father and Metropolitan.

As always, at the exit, you will all receive various small gifts as a blessing,

and also a memento: a copy of the Icon depicting the vision of St. Seraphim of Sarov, which was offered this evening to our spiritual Father.

The new calendars for 2008 are also available at the exit.

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2. – *Polychronion.*

3. – *Distribution of treats and mementoes.*

4. – *“Through the prayers of our holy Fathers...”*

⌘

The End.

**And to our God be
glory, honor, and thanksgiving!**