

An Event of Especial Spiritual Importance

**The Patronal Feast of the
Convent of the *Panagia Myrtdiotissa*,
Aphidnai, Attica**

September 24, 2009 (Old Style)

BY THE GRACE of our Savior Jesus Christ and the protection of the Most Blessed *Theotokos*, the Convent of the *Panagia Myrtdiotissa*, in Aphidnai, Attica, celebrated its Patronal Feast on September 24 (Old Calendar).

This blessed and hesychastic convent, under the direction of the Reverend Mother Evpraxia, joined our Holy Synod seven months ago, on the Sunday of Cheesefare (February 16, 2009 [Old Style]). His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod, celebrated a festal Divine Liturgy at the convent at that time, after which a *Trisagion* was chanted at the grave of its foundress and first Abbess, the Reverend Mother Evgenia of blessed memory (†July 20, 2000).

The convent's virtuous Sisterhood, by the Grace of God and through the intercessions of the *Theotokos*, is undergoing a spiritual revitalization: Father Soterios Gioules serves regularly as Priest; three young nuns have been added to the Sisterhood; and Bishop Cyprian has personally undertaken the role of spiritual Father, regularly confessing the sisters, and, through special *Monastic Gatherings* (five to date), endeavors to nurture them in the genuine ethos of monasticism.

His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, First Hierarchy of the Holy Synod, is essentially the co-founder of this convent, since he had decisively helped the ever-memorable Mother Evgenia when she walled herself off from the New Calendar Church in the 1970s and joined our Holy Synod. He then assisted her as she built the present *Hesychasterion*.

Around 1979, without breaking our unity of Faith and love, the convent joined a different Old Calendarist jurisdiction. But now, thir-

ty years later, we have experienced the miracle of reunification in Christ and the *Theotokos*, to the glory of the Holy Trinity!

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Bishop Cyprian liturgized at this first Patronal Feast after the reunification, assisted by two Presbyters, Fathers Soterios Gioules and Konstantinos Soteriades, and two Subdeacons, Monk Antonios Hagiokyprianites and Demetrios Giatrakos.



The choir of the nearby Convent of the Holy Angels, under the Reverend Mother Taxiarchia, chanted beautifully, thereby cultivating yet more profoundly the spiritual relationship between the two Sisterhoods, which are wonderfully united under the protection of the *Theotokos*.

Also present at the Feast Day were the Reverend Mother Makrina, Abbess of the Convent of St. Paraskeve (Acharnai, Attica), with two of her nuns, and the Reverend Mother Christonymphe, Abbess of the Convent of the Transfiguration (Varnava, Attica), with one of her nuns.

The President of the municipality of Aphidnai, Mr. Alexandros Zouganeles, who pleasantly surprised us with his prayerful reverence, was one of the many laypeople joining in the celebration.

Before Holy Communion, Bishop Cyprian spoke for over seventy minutes on the theme: “*The Most Blessed Theotokos, the Cross of Christ, and our own Cross.*” This homily, regarding the relationship between the Cross and the

Theotokos, dealt with essential subjects of Orthodox doctrine and ethos in a simple and comprehensible manner, through the use of distinctive examples.

Many of the faithful communed of the Immaculate Mysteries, after which a procession



was made three times around the convent's main Church, with a prayer each time at the grave of the ever-memorable foundress, Mother Evgenia.

At the end, a festal meal that was both light and fasting (since it was a Wednesday) was served to all those present.



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The weather was spring-like, and the little convent of the *Panagia* shone in the midst of the beautiful forest, as rational and irrational creation participated in the Feast Day of the one who was, and is, the frontier between Uncreated and created nature, and who was shown to be god after God, having the second place after the Holy Trinity and being a dispenser of the entire wealth of Divinity!

May the little ship of the *Panagia Myrtiliotissa* have a fair journey and safely guide many souls to the Haven of the Heavenly Kingdom. Amen!

