



“For the Edification of the Church”

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■ Need for support, strengthening, and catechism

Sixth Pastoral Visit and Pilgrimage to the Blessed Island of Sardinia

January 13-17, 2018 (Old Style)



By the Grace of our Lord, and with the blessing of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos and of the Diocesan Hierarchy, His Eminence, Bishop Silouan (Silvano) of Luni, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle made a sixth pastoral visit and pilgrimage to the blessed island of Sardinia, Italy, from January 13-17, 2018 (Old Style).

As in previous years, Metropolitan Cyprian was invited by the Small Flock of our Mission in Sardinia to participate in the Feast Day of the Church of the Holy Martyrs Cyprian and Justina and the Holy Great Martyr Efisio (January 15, the day of the latter’s martyrdom), in the municipality of Selargius, Cagliari. His Eminence was also invited to participate in the Patronal Feast of the Monastery of St. Anthony the Great, in Marrubiu.

Despite his heavy schedule and certain health problems, His Eminence decided to accept the invitation of our brothers and sisters and to go with a small group to Sardinia for their support and strengthening.

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On Friday afternoon, January 13 (Old Style), Hieromonks Father Antonio (Pompianu) and Father Mariano (Orrù), together with a few of the faithful, met the group of visitors at the airport

of Cagliari with joy and gratitude.

They then went to the Church of the Holy Martyrs Cyprian, Justina, and Efisio, where, following the customary reception of the Hierarchy, Father Mariano discussed the program for the following days with our Most Reverend Metropolitan.



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On Saturday, January 14 (Old Style), the pilgrims went to the ancient city of Nora, approximately one hour south of Cagliari, accompanied by Father Mariano and a few of the faithful.



Near the archeological site, the visitors venerated a portion of the Holy Relics of St. Efisio in the Romanesque style Church (11th century) built in his honor over his tomb, and chanted the Apolytikia of St. Efisio and of All Saints of Sardinia, both composed by Metropolitan Cyprian.

That afternoon, festal Great Vespers (for both Sunday and St. Efisio) was celebrated with the prayerful participation of a small group of faithful.

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On the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee, January 15 (Old Style), Resurrectional Orthros, with hymns to the Holy Great Martyr Efisio, was chanted in Greek. Metropolitan Cyprian presided at the festal Divine Liturgy, with the participation of Archimandrite Father Mariano (the parish Rector), Subdeacon Christos Katsoudas, the pilgrims from Greece, the Small Flock of our local Church, and a number of friends and catechumens.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence delivered a brief sermon, in which he spoke about the connection between the Gospel reading of the day and the commemora-



tion of the Holy Great Martyr Efisio. He particularly emphasized that the struggle against self-justification and the practice of self-reproach, such as that of the Publican, elicit Divine Grace to our soul, enriching it with the gifts of repentance and of humility, whereby we are granted the charism of the courage of Confession.



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After the festal agape meal, Metropolitan Cyprian and the Greek visitors went to the town of Mandas, about 50 kilometers north of Cagliari, where they visited for the second time, in a new, private location, the Accademia Santu Jacu-Laboratorio di Iconografia Cristiana (the St. James School of Iconography), directed by Michele Ziccheddu, who had visited Greece in November of 2015 for the purpose of becoming better acquainted with our Metropolis' Iconography workshop for laypeople and of conversing with its director, Hierodeacon Gabriel Agiokyprianites.



Michele Ziccheddu, together with his wife and colleague, welcomed with great joy and spiritual interest our Most Reverend Archbishop, who evangelically sowed seeds of patristic words in their well-disposed hearts.

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On Monday, January 16 (Old Style), the visitors from Greece, together with Father Mariano and some of the faithful, made their

customary pilgrimage to the island of Sant'Antioco, named after St. Antiochus the Unmercenary Physician, Enlightener, and Patron Saint of the island and all of Sardinia.

In the sixth century Church dedicated to St. Antiochus, which is built over his tomb, the Holy Relics of the Saint are displayed for veneration. His Eminence laid the first Icon of the Saint on top of his Relics as a blessing, and subsequently offered the Icon to our parish in Cagliari.



Under the Church, a portion of the ancient catacombs that served as a pre-Christian necropolis is preserved. Hidden here, St. Antioch lived ascetically and preached the Gospel until his martyrdom in the year 127. A Christian cemetery was then created in these catacombs,

which was in use until the seventh century.

As the pilgrims walked through the catacombs, they smelled a sweet fragrance in the area of the cave-like "cell" of the Saint and the early Christian archeological finds. In response to their question, the courteous guide replied that the phenomenon of the fragrance cannot be rationally explained, since no one ever burns incense in that place, but that it is a common occurrence, frequently noticed by visitors.



That evening, His Eminence met with Father Mariano to discuss the situation of our community in Sardinia, the need to find an appropriate place for a Church, and the prospects for the future. He also met with, and heard the confessions of, members of the parish, instilling them with peace and hope.



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On Tuesday, January 17 (Old Style), commemoration of St. Anthony the Great, the group of pilgrims went with Father Mariano and long-standing parish member Antonia, who was cel-

celebrating her Nameday, to Marrubiu, located in the northwest of the island, in order to participate in the Patronal Feast of the monastery built by Hieromonk Father Antonio in a beautiful and quiet area of land outside of the city.



Metropolitan Cyprian presided at the festal Divine Liturgy, assisted by Father Antonio, Father Mariano, a few of the faithful, and the visitors from Greece. The Divine Liturgy was chanted in Greek and Italian.



In his homily, after wishing Father Antonio many years of blessed ministry to the Church, His Eminence spoke about a phrase from the Doxastikon at Vespers: “compelling thy nature manfully...” which summarizes the entire struggle of our life in Christ. In order for our ailing nature to be healed

and freed from pride, self-love, and love of pleasure, a constant and valiant effort is needed, which, joined by prayer, elicits the healing Grace of God. This entire ascetic endeavor is comprised in the exhortation of Christ: “watch and pray...”

After the Divine Liturgy and some monastic refreshments, everyone went to the municipal cemetery, where a *Trisagion* was chanted at the graves of Metropolitan Giovanni (†June 13, 2002) and our Priest, Father Mario Bulla (†2001).

A festal meal was then served, at which Father Joseph from the neighboring parish was present, together with his Presbytera and the nephew of Metropolitan Giovanni of blessed memory, Reader Marco.



After this warm and familial meal, Metropolitan Cyprian and those with him left for the airport, where some of the faithful had already arrived in order to receive the blessing of our Metropolitan and to express their gratitude yet again.

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This sixth pastoral visit and pilgrimage to the Small Flock of Sardinia proved once again the great need for support and catechism of our brothers and sisters, who are struggling to live in accordance with the Orthodox Faith and ethos of the Gospel in the spiritual desert of the West.

Indeed, the truly self-sacrificing decision of our Most Reverend Metropolitan to accept their invitation once again gave a revitalizing impetus to their good efforts, which need the prayers of all of us.

