



■ On the occasion of the commemoration of St. Philothei of Athens

Winter Pastoral Visit to the Holy Diocese of Stockholm

February 17-20, 2018 (Old Style)



With the blessing of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos and of the Holy Synod, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, in his capacity as *Locum Tenens*, made his wintertime pastoral visit to the Holy Diocese of Stockholm, which coincided this year with the Patronal Feast of the Convent of St. Philothei, in Villberga, Grillby.

For this reason, along with the Reverend Father Jiří Ján and Subdeacon Christos Katsoudas, Metropolitan Cyprian was accompanied by the Reverend Mother Taxiarchia, Abbess of the Convent of the Holy Angels (Aphidnai, Greece), and one of her nuns, since Mother Magdalene and Sister Lydia maintain strong spiritual ties with the Sisterhood of their mother Convent, where they received their monastic training.

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On Friday, February 17 (Old Style), our Most Reverend Metropolitan and those with him arrived at noon in Stockholm and went to the Bishop's residence in the suburb of Vårberg, where, following the reception of the Hierarch, they immediately visited His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis at his bedside, who greeted them with his customary serene love.

Following the meal, the nuns left for the Convent of St. Phi-

lothei in order to celebrate Great Vespers and the Salutations to the Theotokos. In the meantime, His Eminence had a lengthy meeting with Episcopal Representative Father Anders and Father Jiří regarding various matters of a canonical and pastoral nature.



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The celebration of the Feast Day of St. Philothei was transferred to Saturday, February 18 (Old Style) so that His Eminence could be at the parish in Stockholm on Sunday. Despite the cold (-17° Celsius in the morning hours), a number of parishioners from Stockholm, Uppsala, and Finland went to the snow-covered convent of the Saint in order to participate in the Feast Day.

Metropolitan Cyprian presided at Orthros and the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, assisted by Father Anders, Father Jiří, Father Stefanos, Hierodeacon Father Theocharis, and Subdeacon Christos. The service was chanted in Greek, English, and Swedish.

The Grace and feeling of the presence of St. Philothei was pervasive among the faithful, the majority of whom partook of the Immaculate Mysteries.

In his brief homily, Metropolitan Cyprian spoke about the life and activity of St. Philothei, who shown forth as a Martyr of Compassion, but also a "feminist" in the good sense, since she struggled unto death in defence of the dignity of women,

who were in danger of being enslaved body and soul by the Ottoman occupiers of Greece.



In contrast to modern feminists, who proclaim that "our body belongs to us" and make destructive use of it, we are called to



preserve our body unblemished as a temple of the Holy Spirit and a gift of God that *does not* "belong to us," but to our Creator.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a procession was made through the snowy grounds of the convent to the grave of its founder, Mother Philothei († 2012), where a Trisagion was served and everyone sang "Christ is Risen."

Following the festal *agape* meal served to all those in attendance by the monastic sisterhood, Metropolitan Cyprian had a Synaxis with the clergy and nuns, during which he spoke about the mode of operation, witness, and responsibility of our Holy Synod on a pan-Orthodox level.

That afternoon, Resurrectional Vespers and the Small Compline were served at the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen in Stockholm.

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On February 19 (Old Style), the Second Sunday of Lent, on which we commemorate St. Gregory Palamas, the Midnight Office, Resurrectional Orthros, and a Hierarchical Divine were celebrated at the Church in Stockholm. Metropolitan Cyprian liturgized together with the Diocesan clergy, with Bishop Johannes in prayerful attendance in his wheelchair, to everyone's delight.



The parish choir, assisted by the nuns, sang in Greek, Swedish, Church Slavonic, and English.

In his sermon, His Eminence spoke about the meaning of the Sundays of Great Lent leading up to the Resurrection, and the genuine manner in which one must traverse this period, combining fasting with works of compassion, that is, love to our neighbor, and with increased prayer.



Following the parish *agape* meal, Metropolitan Cyprian had a three-hour-long meeting with Syrian faithful belonging to a New Calendar Church, who have been deeply troubled by the ecumenical deviations of their leaders, and who wish to join themselves to Genuine Orthodoxy.

Immediately after this important and hopeful meeting, the customary parish Synaxis took place, during which His Eminence once again spoke about the various aspects of the Fast

and discussed the guarding of our senses, the combination of prayer and attention, and the diverse small efforts, of a practical and spiritual nature, by which we can prepare ourselves to receive the renewing joy of the Resurrection.



Then, following the reading of a text about a pious soul who regulated her life by the daily goal: "one day closer to Paradise," a discussion developed about the memory of death and of Paradise, the meditation upon which keeps us in a constant state of vigilance.

The joy in Christ of our revered Shepherd and of our flock was manifest throughout his entire short visit, which once again strengthened our brothers and sisters in the North in their struggle for their perfection in Christ.

For the consolidation of the faithful, Metropolitan Cyprian gave Father Anders mementos (in *Swedish, English, Arabic, and Greek*) regarding the Third Apparition of the Precious Cross, which took place on September 14, 1925, so that he could distribute them on the Third Sunday of Lent (the Veneration of the Cross).

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On Monday, February 20 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian and his those with him returned to their homeland, laden with the grateful best wishes of our faithful and clergy in Sweden, who are already looking forward to his next pastoral visit in spring.

