

Yet Another Pilgrimage to the Prisons of Athens: The Journey of Love Continues

On the Feast of St. Thomas, April 21, 2008 (Old Style), the St. Philaret the Merciful Orthodox Women's Guild made another visit to the prisons in the vicinity of Athens, this time to the Juvenile Prison in Avlona. The visit, undertaken with the blessing of our ailing Metropolitan, was



led by His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod, and began immediately after the conclusion of the Sunday Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina in Phyle (Athens). (See the attached photograph, outside the monastery Cathedral.)

The group of eighteen lay persons, accompanied by seven nuns representing two of our Synod's convents (the Convent of the Holy Angels and the Convent of St. Paraskeve) and three monks from the monastery in Phyle, was received warmly by the Director of the Prison, who gave the visitors free access to any part of the facility.

Having visited the prison chapel, the prisoners, around one hundred in number, and some as young as fifteen years of age, were presented gifts, one by one, as they kissed the hand of Bishop Cyprian. Some of



them, in fact, were Moslem youngsters, who nonetheless, in a very moving act of fraternity, asked to kiss His Grace's hand, as well as the Icon of Christ which the visitors carried with them to the prison.

At the conclusion of the visit, Bishop Cyprian thanked the young prisoners for giving the pilgrims more than they had given the young offenders, characteristically making a prostration and asking forgiveness of the youngsters, assuring them that the sins of the visitors and those outside the prison were responsible for the suffering of those incarcerated therein.

