

A very beneficial pastoral visit

The Feast Day of St. John the Merciful

Thessalonica, November 12

His Grace, Bishop Cyprian of Oreoi, Acting President of the Holy Synod, visited Thessalonica for three days (November 11-13 [Old Style]), for the occasion of the Feast Day of St. John the Merciful, on Tuesday, November 12, 2008.

By the Grace of God, this proved to be a very beneficial pastoral visit, consisting of both liturgical gatherings and three special parish gatherings, which took place in the newly-built Spiritual Center dedicated to St. Theophan the Recluse (opposite the Church of St. John the Merciful in Thessalonica), and in the parish hall of the Church of the Holy Twelve Apostles (Kymina, Thessalonica).

The central message of this pastoral visit was that of **compassion**, since this is the virtue that preëminently characterized St. John the Merciful, Patriarch of Alexandria, whose memory was being honored.

During the Divine Liturgy celebrated at our *Metochion* [dependency] dedicated to St. John on the occasion of its Patronal Feast, Bishop Cyprian delivered a homily before Holy Communion, placing special emphasis on **compassionate nobility**, which is neither mere **forbearance** (ie., a negative relationship) nor mere **tolerance**



(ie., showing conciliatory understanding). Rather, it constitutes our **responsibility** to demonstrate **active love**, so as to elicit our brother's "inner inheritance": Our neighbor is an **Image of God**, possesses the **seal of God** within him (*terminus a quo*), and has received the **calling to become a Saint**; he is a **potential Saint** (*terminus ad quem*).

Within this perspective, and also that of the concentric principle of *moderation*—as a legacy of our much-revered Metropolitan Cyprian,

First Hierarchy of the Holy Synod—, eleven texts were jointly read, analyzed, and discussed by those participating in the gatherings held during these days, which contributed decisively to the strengthening of the bonds of love in Christ between Shepherds and flock.



Two Hierarchical Divine Liturgies were celebrated: one at the *Metochion* of St. John, on the morning of its Patronal Feast, and the other in the evening, at the Church of the Holy Twelve Apostles in Kymina, for the Feast Day of St. John Chrysostomos. Taking part in the former were Archimandrite Glykerios Hagiokyprianites (the Priest in charge of the *Metochion*) and Father Bitalios Almanides (Rector of the Church in Katerine). Father Glykerios again took part in the second Liturgy (as serving Priest of the Church of the Holy Twelve Apostles), along with Subdeacon Antonios Hagiokyprianites.

Father Glykerios, who has indefatigably been offering his pastoral services in Thessalonica for nearly two decades, had organized the entire program for Bishop Cyprian's visit with great care, along with his praiseworthy coworkers.

We thus also had the exceptional blessing of venerating the Relics of the Patron Saints of Thessalonica, St. Demetrios the Myrrh-Gusher (who miraculously continues to exude exquisitely fragrant myrrh) and St. Gregory Palamas, and also those of the Holy Martyr Anysia.

Glory to God for all things!

