

Pastoral Visit to Northern Greece

On the afternoon of Saturday, April 15, 2012 (Old Style), His Grace, Bishop Klemes (Clement) of Gardikion arrived by automobile in Thessaloniki, where he was in prayerful attendance at the Vespers service for the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers at the Chapel of St. John the Merciful, just above the Church of St. Demetrios, a dependency of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina.

Afterwards, in the parish lecture hall, at a meeting with the gathered faithful, he spoke about the Apostolic preaching of faith and repentance and our hope in the Living God, Who was crucified, buried, and arose on the third day, so that He might fill all things with His Divine and spiritual Light. He also spoke about the miraculous appearance of light at the headquarters of our Church in Phyle, just before its distribution at the chanting of “Come, receive the Light...,” on the night of Pascha, which was witnessed by a number of the faithful, who were deemed worthy to see it, something which also took place in 2005.

- On the Sunday of the Myrrhbearers, April 16, 2012 (Old Style), His Grace, Bishop Klemes liturgized at the Church of the Holy Apostles in Kymina, near Thessaloniki, with the Very Reverend Archimandrite Father Glykerios, a brother of the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, and the Reverend Father John Oikonomou, with a large crowd of faithful in attendance,

His Grace, Bishop Klemes spoke about the phenomenon of the Empty Tomb and the Resurrection, which the Myrrhbearing women were worthy to behold, and which we experience in the Orthodox Church. In each Church, according to St. Gregory Palamas, we find the Empty Tomb and the Throne of God, since within the Holy Altar there lies on the Holy Table, at the Divine Liturgy, our Resurrected



Lord, Jesus Christ. And he who with faith gazes upon the Bread of Life “sees the very Hypostasis of the Word of God.” Moreover, one who receives the Holy Gifts becomes a partaker of Christ and is filled with Divine Grace. In this manner, the heart of man constitutes a “Tomb of the Master,” as St. Maximos the Confessor tells us, having received the deifying Energy of God. However, each believer must confront the question of the Myrrhbearing Women: “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre” (St. Mark 16:3)? Like a great stone stand the impediments keeping us from availing ourselves of Divine Blessings, such as indolence, cowardice, the remembrance of the necessities of life, and so on. We, too, must overcome the impediments and the weaknesses elicited by our minds and our senses; and we, too, must offer up our tears of repentance as myrrh and our good works to Christ our Savior, so that we can live in the Light of the Resurrection and be made worthy of our salvation.

- After the Divine Liturgy, in the discussion that ensued in the parish Hall, His Grace, Bishop Klemes made reference to the experience of Pascha, as it is presented to us within the mystical Body of the Church. As St. Gregory the Theologian asserts, we have three Passovers (Paschas): that of the Law of the Old Testament, that of Grace—that is, the Passover of the Resurrection of the Lord—and the Eternal Pascha, that of the “unending and purest” Passover of



the Eternal Kingdom. The first, the crossing through the Red Sea, was a symbol of the second, the actual passage “from death to life and from earth to Heaven.” The Pascha of Grace is, according to the Divine Chrysostomos, the Divine Eucharist, but also the coming

of the Word into the mind and heart of man, according to St. Maximos the Confessor. This experience leads us to the certain hope in the expectation of the Eternal Feast of the Kingdom.

Finally, His Grace addressed and dealt with matters of timely interest.



• That evening, there took place the wedding of Chrestos Papadopoulou, from the city of Drama, a Chanter and philologist, to Athanasia Papagiotes, from the city of Larissa, at the Church of All Saints in Katerina. The Holy Mystery was celebrated by His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone, the spiritual Father of the couple, and His Grace, Bishop Klemes of Gardikion, the biological brother of the groom. Archimandrite Father Glykerios also took part in the service, along with the Pastor of the Church, Father Vitalios Almanides, the Reverend Father John Oikonomou from Thessaloniki, and the Reverend Father Nicholas Matsoulis from Ptolemaï. A large crowd of friends, acquaintances, and relatives of the bridal couple came for the occasion. At the end of the service, which was celebrated in a prayerful spirit, the two Hierarchs spoke briefly about its importance, about its joyfully social and amatory aspect, and also about its martyric dimension, which finds its fulfillment in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ for the Church and in our expectation of the Eternal Nuptials of the Kingdom.

