



■ The vision of St. Constantine the Great and our responsibility

The Patronal Feast of the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen Stockholm, May 2015

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, *Locum Tenens* of the Holy Diocese of Stockholm, the Feast Day celebration of the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen (which also serves



as the Episcopal residence, in Vårberg, southwest of Stockholm) was transferred to the weekend of May 24-25, 2015 (Old Style) for the accommodation of the faithful.

Sadly, Metropolitan Cyprian was unable to attend the Feast Day this year owing to ill health, but the parish was nevertheless honored by the presence of two nuns from the Convent of the Holy Angels (Aphidnai, Greece), which is the Mother Convent of our *Hesychasterion* dedicated to St. Philothei in Villberga, and two pious laypeople from our Church in Greece.

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On Saturday, May 24 (Old Style), Great Vespers was celebrated in honor of Sts. Constantine and Helen, followed by Small Compline and the Salutations to the Saints.

On Sunday, May 25 (Old Style), after the Midnight Office, the



nuns from Greece and the Convent of St. Philothei read and chanted Orthros in Greek, Swedish, and English. At the Praises, the parish choir took over at the *analogion*, chanting for the first time in Swedish the *Stichera* in honor of the Saints, which had been set to music by the choir director, Reader Peter Magneli, for the

occasion of the Feast Day.

At the Divine Liturgy, chanted by the parish choir in Swedish, Greek, and Slavonic, the principal celebrant was Father Anders Åkerström (the Episcopal Representative), assisted by Father Stefanos Jaerpenberg and Hierodeacon Theochares Hagiokyprianites.

His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis was well enough on this day to be in prayerful attendance at the entire Divine Liturgy, which was a source of great joy for all.

We cannot sufficiently express our gratitude to His Grace, who founded our parish in Stockholm and has struggled tirelessly on behalf of the Orthodox Faith for more than thirty-five years. We are now reaping the fruits of his labors.

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It was a great blessing for us that Metropolitan Cyprian, in his pastoral solicitude, had sent us, despite his ill health, a homily entitled "St. Constantine the Equal to the Apostles: His Vision and Our Responsibility," written especially for the Feast Day, and which Father Anders read after the Gospel.

- St. Constantine was not only the first Christian Emperor, but was also the one who "in like manner to the Apostles, reformed the entire institutional network of public life, aspiring to imbue it with an ecclesiastical ethos, having the Cross and Christ at its center."

The West, however, has decidedly rejected such a vision. Bishop

Johannes was truly enlightened by God in his decision to dedicate the Church to St. Constantine, as our Metropolitan writes, "thereby turning away, with discernment and wisdom, from western rationalism."

Metropolitan Cyprian emphasizes that our parish has a responsibility to our brothers and sisters in the West to "show forth our Church as a living vessel and an ever-flowing wellspring of the ever-new, ageless civilization envisioned by St. Constantine the Great.

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At the end of the Divine Liturgy, Father Anders specially thanked our Greek visitors for strengthening us by their presence, in that they "always bring with them something of the spiritual air of Greek Orthodoxy and of our beloved monasteries in Greece."

He expressed his regret at the state of Metropolitan Cyprian's health and stressed the gratitude of our mission in Sweden for his pastoral love and care. We eagerly await his return—when his health permits it—since his presence is a source of renewal and deepening of our Orthodox Faith and life.

Finally, a procession was made around the Church with the Icon of the Saints, ending with the Blessing of the Loaves on the newly paved patio at the entrance of the Church.



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With the blessing and supervision of Metropolitan Cyprian, Hierodeacon Theochares and the biological father of Mother Magdalene, Per-Åke Jonsved—a retired landscape designer—with several volunteers from the parish, had worked hard to complete the patio in time for the Feast Day. They had also gone to great lengths to transform the area behind the Church, where Bishop Johannes' grave has already been prepared, into a tidy and peaceful final resting place.



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During the *Agape* meal, Fathers Anders read aloud festal greetings from His Eminence, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, His Grace, Bishop Auxentios, and Archimandrite Akakios, from the Monastery of St. Gregory Palamas (Etna, California), with whom we have a special spiritual relationship. He also publicly thanked Per-Åke Jonsved on behalf of the parish for his self-sacrificial work on the grounds of the Bishop's Residence.



Fathers Anders and Stefanos, the nuns, and two laypeople then drove to the Woodland Cemetery (Skogskyrkogården) to chant a *Trisagion* at the grave of Mother Parthenia (the Presbytera of Bishop Johannes before both of them became monastics).

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We send up thanksgiving to Sts. Constantine and Helen for the blessings they bestowed on our small parish and Diocese on the occasion of their commemoration!

Let us all take seriously our responsibility to promote the vision of St. Constantine by becoming shining witnesses to the Faith, thereby continuing the important work that Bishop Johannes inaugurated in Sweden, through the prayers of Metropolitan Cyprian.

*Father Anders Åkerström,
Episcopal Representative
of the Diocese of Stockholm*