



## A Pastoral Visit to Snow-Draped Sweden

January 9-13, 2016 (Old Style)

**B**y the Grace of our Lord, our most recent pastoral visit to the Holy Diocese of Sweden was sealed with a powerful symbolism: the snow, exuding wholesomeness, chasteness, and the purity of Creation in the midst of the white Light of the Holy Trinity. "And His raiment be-came shining, exceeding white as snow...."



This was the first time in the eight years of our visits that beautiful Sweden greeted us bedecked like a bride in her snow-white garment. We were given hospitality amid the joy of our Small Flock, our multicolored and multinational family, in the warmth of the *New Commandment*.

\* \* \*

**Furnished** with the heartfelt best wishes of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos and of the Hierarchs of our Holy Synod, which had convened the previous day, we flew to Stockholm, via Munich, on Friday, January 9, 2016 (Old Style). We were accompanied by our usual travelling companions, the Reverend Father Jiří Ján and Subdeacon Monk Antonios Hagiokyprianites.



We devoted the few days of our sojourn in Sweden to contact

and prayer with our clergy and people, mutual edification, catechism, and dealing with organizational and liturgical matters of our Holy Diocese.



On Saturday, we liturgized at the Convent of St. Philothei in Villberga, with the participation of a small group of our faithful.

On Sunday, we concelebrated the Divine Liturgy with all of our clergy at the Episcopal Residence, with the sisters from the Convent providing the chanting. The beautiful Church was filled with faithful “of all of the nations.” The Gospel reading (in Swedish and Greek) for the Sunday after Theophany (“Repent ye...”) afforded us the opportunity to describe the characteristics of constant and genuine repentance. A large number of the faithful communed of the Immaculate Mysteries, and at the end of the Liturgy everyone sat down together at the parish *agape* meal in simplicity of heart.

That evening, we held our customary parish *synaxis*, during which we discussed the fundamental relationship between repentance and compassion, as opposed to judgment and condemnation. Mother Magdalene, a native Swede, did the interpreting. Several heterodox, and even a non-Christian, were also in attendance.

On Monday, we visited Stockholm’s snow-swept Skogskyrkogården Cemetery, where we chanted a *Trisagion* at the graves of two of our Orthodox brethren for the repose of their souls.





We also met with people who may constitute the future of our Holy Diocese in Sweden. Indeed, the future appears to be quite promising, since extremely capable and gifted people are being drawn to our jurisdiction. In good time, we will write

more specifically about this very important matter, which is, in fact, related to our endeavors to found a men's monastery.

We must make special mention of His Grace, Bishop Johannes, who has remained bed-ridden for many years in great pain. His own particular martyrdom continues. His sufferings notwithstanding, he continues to offer edification and consolation to the People of God, joyful in the midst of his pain and grateful in the midst of his affliction. We visited him, conveyed to him the best wishes of our Archbishop and Hierarchs, took his blessing, embraced him, and sang festal hymns for him. He asked us to convey to our Archbishop one request: to pray for him. Perhaps his end is approaching....



\* \* \*

**On** Tuesday, around 3 p.m., our brethren saw us off, wishing us a good journey back to Greece and a speedy return in May for the Feast Day of Sts. Constantine and Helen, the Patronal Feast of our Episcopal Residence.

Glory, worship, and thanksgiving to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, unto the ages of ages. Amen!

*January 13/26, 2016*

*† Holy Martyrs*

*Hermilos and Stratonikos*

*† Metropolitan Cyprian  
of Oropos and Phyle*

