



## “For the Edification of the Church”

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“I was in prison and ye came unto Me” (St. Matthew 25:36)

## Visit to the Special Detention Center for Youth in Volos, Greece

† June 26, 2016 (Old Style)

**O**n Saturday, June 26, 2016 (Old Style, commemoration of St. David of Thessalonica and first Saturday of the Apostles’ Fast), with the blessing and guidance of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, we made our tenth visit to the Special Detention Center for Youth in Volos, northern Greece.



Once again, the members of the St. Philaret the Merciful Orthodox Women’s Guild carefully organized and made all the necessary preparations for this visit to our incarcerated brothers, some fifty-five in number.

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**During** the journey to the detention center, as is our custom, we chanted hymns from Orthros and the Supplicatory Canon to Saint Philaret, and then read a text by St. Gregory of Nysa on the timely subject of refugees, homeless people, the unemployed, and the starving, followed by three of Aesop’s Fables. On our return journey, we chanted





Great Vespers and read the Small Compline.

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**Arriving** at the prison, we were received by the kindhearted director and his friendly co-workers, who brought

us up to date on the present conditions at the facility, after which we entered the inner courtyard.

For the first time, our visit was interrupted by an attempted *diversion*. As soon as we found ourselves face to face with the young inmates (aged 18 to 25), the Muslim call to prayer rang out, followed by music playing at full blast: we were being “welcomed” by the prison’s first jihadist, who was recently incarcerated. Composed and courteous, the director offered to ask him to turn down the volume. And indeed, the volume was turned down, and after a little while everything was quiet.

In the meantime, our Chief Shepherd remained unperturbed, and after a few words of greeting and encouragement to our brothers, he gave them each an embrace of paternal love in Christ along with a care package containing items to meet their basic and personal needs. He was assisted in this by Father Soterios and the other Fathers, and accompanied by the chanting of the choir of nuns.

At one point, the young jihadist (18 or 19 years old) also came down and stepped forward, without identifying himself, to accept His Eminence’s embrace and his gift.

Hope... that “all seeds of love that are sown will, sooner or later, blossom forth.”

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**During** the return journey, we had the blessing of once again venerating the wonderwork-



ing Icon of the Mother of God at the Monastery of St. Agathon and of invoking her maternal assistance.

**We** also raffled a beautiful Icon of Christ the Bridegroom, donated by the Reverend Mother Eupraxia, on behalf of our indigent brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Yet again,** glory and thanksgiving to our Lord, who once more vouchsafed us to visit Him in the person of our incarcerated brothers, and to participate in concerted Orthodox volunteerism.

