



## “For the Edification of the Church”

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

## Tenth Pilgrimage to the Detention Center of Amphissa

†First Saturday of Souls, February 5, 2017 (Old Style)



**O**n the First Soul Saturday, February 6, 2017 (Old Style), following our custom of visiting our imprisoned brothers at the beginning and end of Great Lent, we made our tenth visit to the Detention Center of Amphissa, with the blessing, guid-

ance, and participation of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle.

The St. Philaret the Merciful Orthodox Women’s Guild, assisted by our Metropolis’ Association of Volunteers, once again undertook the organization of this visit.

The personal care items, which were distributed to 120 inmates, were kindly donated to the Guild by various sponsors, private individuals, and stores.

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**A**s always on such pilgrimages, our Most Reverend Metropolitan made use of the travel time for prayer, psalmody, and the reading of a timely text on the benefit of Memorial Services and forty days of Liturgies for the departed.



The pilgrims were given a short text as a *memento*, containing a simple yet profound message, entitled, “How we heal our Brother with consideration and love.”



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The **spring-like** weather made the journey particularly pleasant, but more importantly it facilitated and brightened our meeting with our incarcerated brothers in the detention center’s narrow inner courtyard, where many song sparrows—for whom the barred wire was nothing but a podium—tirelessly welcomed the coming of springtime and the visitors.

Following the warm-hearted, humble, and loving greetings of our Shepherd, who once again exhorted our brothers to approach their tribulation in a way that is creative and revitalizing, and to take pains to free themselves from the *inner* prison of their passions—of which we all have experience—several of the prisoners responded on behalf of the others with words of gratitude.



One of them emotionally greeted the children and adolescents in the group, saying: “I see in you my own grandchildren!”

The Routse family and other children then sang charming folk songs, which brought a springtime aura of wholesome joy and insouciance to the otherwise gloomy courtyard, as everyone clapped along in time to the rhythm of the children’s voices.

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**Our** Most Reverend Shepherd then went with the others into the visiting hall in order to give to each of the inmates, one by one, his paternal love and the personal care items that our Guild’s volunteers had prepared, and also “spiritual care items”: small Icons, Cross, and short texts.



Since quite a few of the inmates asked



A gift from one of our imprisoned brothers to our Most Reverend Shepherd.



for prayer ropes, we would encourage all those who can to make prayer ropes of 33 or 50 knots for our brothers, doing so with prayer, and thereby cultivating a sense of concern for them. The prayer ropes can be given to our Shepherd or to the St. Philaret Guild for this purpose.

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**The** Warden of the detention center then cordially invited our Most Reverend Metropolitan and his coworkers into his office, where he spoke about the special cultural codes that regulate the relationship among the inmates, and also between them and the correctional officers. He said that experience has taught him that there are no *bad* inmates, only *disorderly* ones.



And indeed, when the group of pilgrims was getting ready to leave, someone ran up with refreshments for the children, sent to them by a kindly and grateful prisoner—one serving a life sentence!

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**O**n our return journey, we once again visited the renowned Monastery of Hosios Loukas of Steirion, where we venerated his Grace-filled Relics.



**We** prayed for our own problems, for our homeland, for our Church, and for the whole world.

The spiritual consolation derived from such visits to prisons and pilgrimages to the holy places of our Faith is indeed great. The pilgrims

strengthen their bonds of love in Christ, experience the Church in their lives as that of the *family of Christ*, receive relief from the cares of everyday life, and are truly revitalized.

**G**lory and thanksgiving to our All-Good and Most Compassionate Lord, by Whose Grace every good work is accomplished.

