



Pastoral Visit
to the Holy Diocese of Stockholm
May 18-25, 2018 (Old Style)

By the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit and the intercessions of the Holy God-crowned Monarchs Constantine and Helen, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle made his customary pastoral visit to Sweden, in his capacity as *Locum Tenens*, in order to take part in the annual Patronal Feast of the Cathedral Church of our Holy Diocese. He was accompanied this time by a group of fourteen clergy, monastics, and laypeople.

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On the evening of the Thursday after Pentecost, **May 18, 2018 (Old Style)**, following the customary ecclesiastical reception at the Episcopal residence in Vårberg, Stockholm—with the participation of the Reverend Fathers

Anders Åkerström, Stefanos Jaerpenberg, and Soterios Gioules (the latter from Greece), Hierodeacon Father Theochares, and a small group of faithful from our parish—Metropolitan Cyprian and the other visitors from Greece visited His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis, the founder of our mission in Sweden, at his bedside.

Metropolitan Cyprian conveyed to him the best wishes of our Holy Hierarchs and of the faithful of our Metropolis in



Greece, and asked for his prayers for the activities of the days to come.

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On Friday, May 19 (Old Style), the group of pilgrims, joined by some of the faithful from Stockholm, accompanied Metropolitan Cyprian to the Skogskyrkogården cemetery, where the beauty of nature, good order, and general tidiness make it a true place of repose. In the Orthodox section, they celebrated *Trisagia* at the graves of Mother Parthenia and several other departed faithful.

The group then went to Stockholm’s Old Town for a brief but pleasant tour of the “Venice of the North,” and enjoyed the *tableau vivant* created by the classical architecture, verdant nature, and pristine waterways.

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On Saturday, May 20 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian and the clergy liturgized at the Convent of St. Philothei of Athens, in Villberga, Grillby, where Mother Magdalene and Sister Lydia offer to their surroundings the “salt” of their witness to Orthodox monasticism.



After the Divine Liturgy and the *Trisagion* at the grave of Mother Philothei of blessed memory (†2012), everyone sat down to an outdoor *agape* meal, during which a discussion arose regarding the value of cenobitic life and the causes that make obedience so “difficult” for many people.



That afternoon, Resurrectional Vespers for the Feast of All Saints and of

Sts. Constantine and Helen was celebrated, in Greek and Swedish, at the Diocese's Cathedral Church, followed by the Small Compline with the Akathist Hymn to the Saints being honored and the prayers before Holy Communion.



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On the Sunday of All Saints, **May 21 (Old Style)**, Metropolitan Cyprian presided at the Patronal Feast of the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen, with the participation of the Reverend Fathers Anders and Soterios, Hierodeacon Father Theochares, Subdeacon Christos Katsoudas, several alter servers, and a large multi-ethnic flock of our faithful, many of whom communed of the Immaculate Mysteries.



In his homily, His Eminence spoke about the words of our Lord: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me,” characterizing life in Christ as a life on the cross. He pointed out that our parishioners are especially blessed to have as their Protectors Sts. Constantine and Helen, who held up the Venerable Cross as a banner of our Faith. Every time we venerate an Icon of these Saints we receive the blessing of the Cross positioned between them, whereby we are strengthened in our spiritual struggle.

His Grace, Bishop Johannes gladdened everyone by his presence at the festal Liturgy.

Following the procession with



the Holy Icon of the Saints and the Blessing of the Five Loaves, everyone sat down together for an *agape* meal.

On Sunday evening, from around 7-10 p.m., there took place the customary parish *Synaxis*, during which a text was read and discussed describing a miracle worked by the Mother of God on behalf of a pious farmer, who chose to conceal the miracle so as not to expose the fault of his neighbor.



In the second part of the *Synaxis*, Metropolitan Cyprian responded to questions about modern technology and our freedom and responsibilities as citizens in that regard.



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On Monday, May 22 (Old Style),

His Eminence liturgized at the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in the university town of Uppsala.



At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, Father Anders told the faithful from Greece the history of a wonderworking Icon of St. Theodosios of Chernigov († February 5), which is treasured in the chapel.

Presbytera Birgitta then offered the visitors her habitual hospitality and kindness with a lovely meal, after which Father Anders gave them a tour of the historic center of the city.

That afternoon, Metropolitan Cyprian once again visited the Convent of St. Philothei in Villberga to confess the Sisters and to discuss with them matters concerning the Convent and the Mission in Sweden.



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On Tuesday, May 23 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian and the group from Greece drove to the small town of Järbo, two hours north of Uppsala, in order to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the Chapel dedicated to St. Joseph the Betrothed, located on the property of our brother and sister in Christ, Laurence and Marjo.



Whereas the temperatures had hovered around 30°C the previous days, the thermometer that morning showed just 8°C. The group of faithful squeezed closely together in the tiny chapel....

In his brief sermon, His Eminence compared the experience of the Divine Liturgy with that of a Catacomb in the first years of Christianity, and noted that during the Mystery, as is the case with every Orthodox Church, the humble Chapel was invisibly thronged by all of Her heavenly Members. By our participation in the Immaculate Mysteries we renew the seal of the Lamb. Even though our social surroundings are sinking ever deeper into apostasy, we should fear nothing. Just as the Christians of the first Apostolic years, “here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

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On Wednesday, May 24 (Old Style) Metropolitan Cyprian went to the city of Norrköping, south of Stockholm, to meet a group of Syrian immigrants who wish to belong to Genuine Orthodoxy.



Our hospitable brothers and sisters offered the Greek visitors, who were joined by Father Anders and Hierodeacon Theocharis, a delicious fasting meal of homemade Syrian dishes. At the end of the meal, both groups sang hymns in Greek and Arabic respectively.

The Greeks then visited the picturesque city center, while our Syrian Brethren went with Metropolitan Cyprian and the clergy



to a park by the waterfront, where they informally gathered around His Eminence asking questions about the positions and history of Genuine Orthodoxy, since they had never before had the opportunity to hear about ecumenism, the Church Calendar, the rampant secularization of the “official” jurisdictions, and so on.

The simplicity, approachability, and paternal affection of Metropolitan Cyprian were what spoke most to the good hearts of our Syrian brethren. At the end of the day, they said goodbye with deep emotion and the fervent request that he visit them again as soon as possible.

There is hope that in the near future a place of worship will be available for use by this community, which is distinguished for its zeal and spiritual vibrancy.

Late that night, the visitors from Greece went to Bishop Johannes’ cell to receive his blessing for their return journey.

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On Thursday, May 25 (Old Style), His Eminence and his travelling companions departed at daybreak for their homeland, giving thanks to God for all things, and praying again and again for the strengthening of our heroic small flock and the consolidation of its new members.

