



“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 †Saturday, September 9, (Old Style)



On Saturday, September 9, 2018 (Old Style, Commemoration of the Holy Ancestors of God Joachim and Anna), following the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, there took place our thirteenth visit to the Special Detention Center for Youth in

Volos, with the blessing, guidance, and participation of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian.

The visit to our “imprisoned” Lord, in the person of ninety-five of our incarcerated brothers, took place at the beginning of the New Ecclesiastical Year, so that the yearly cycle of philanthropic activities by the St. Philaret the Merciful Guild would be inaugurated in an especially blessed way.

As always, our Metropolis’ Association of Volunteers eagerly helped the members of the Guild to prepare the care packages containing personal care items, which were kindly donated to our Guild by its various sponsors, private individuals, and stores.

Once again, the self-sacrificing members of the St. Philaret the Merciful charitable guild organized and made the necessary preparations for this visit to ninety-five of our imprisoned young brothers.

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After the customary rule of prayers for these pilgrimages, Metropolitan Cyprian made use of the travel time with hymnody and the reading of two passages from the Old Testament regarding the «dialogue» between the Righteous Abraham and God, when Abraham asked Him not to destroy Sodom if at least ten righteous people would be found within the city (Genesis 18:20-33). His Eminence also read a passage from the Prophet Isaiah regarding the promise of God:



*“Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and [one] saith, **D**estroy it not; for a blessing [is] in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all (Isaiah 65:8).”*

During the joint discussion of this text, our great responsibility as Christians for the salvation of the world was set forth.

The pilgrims were given a memento with a brief text by St. John Chrysostomos, entitled: “Forgiveness: A Commandment of God!” as well as other Patristic messages.

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The pilgrims arrived early at the detention center. **T**he chief warden and the prison social worker warmly greeted our Most Reverend Shepherd and the rest of the group and led them to the inner courtyard, where our imprisoned brothers gathered.

At His Eminence’s exhortation, our small family musical ensemble, together with other children and adults, played and sang rhythmic Greek folk songs, which brought a fresh breath of innocence to the harsh reality of prison life.

Our Most Reverend Metropolitan spoke words of greetings and encouragement to our brothers, whom he exhorted, among other things, to live in love and cooperation with one another, as well as with the facility’s genial and lenient personnel, so that their experience at the facility would be more tolerable and brighter.



He then gave each of the inmates,

one by one, the humble care packages, along with his paternal affection, cheerfulness, and best wishes for their future.

Our young brothers, who at first seemed a bit restless and sarcastic, soon became acclimated to the pure demonstration of love and concern of the visitors, and they eventually expressed their enthusiasm and gratitude in their own way.



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After the customary photograph with the members of the administration, His Eminence and the group of pilgrims visited the Convent of the Life-Giving Spring, in Rizomylo Belestinou, with the blessing of the local Hierarch, His Eminence, Metropolitan Photios of Demetrias.

They were welcomed by nuns Christonymphe and Akakia, Father Constantine Papanatsios (the serving Priest of the Convent) and a few faithful. **After** visiting the Church and chanting together hymns to the Mother of God, they ate lunch at the convent, thanking the Lord and strengthening one another in their common Christian struggle.

The pilgrims returned to their home base exceptionally edified by the experience of this blessed day, which augmented their sense of responsibility towards each of our fellow men, by witnessing to the Faith and living in accordance with the ethos of the Gospel.

