



■ Hopeful progress of the *Small Flock*

Pastoral Visit to the Holy Diocese of Stockholm

May 25 - June 1, 2023 (Old Style)

During the Afterfeast of Holy Pentecost, 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 dedicated to the Holy God-crowned Equals-to-the-Apostles, Sts. Constantine and Helen.

Apart from the visit's liturgical program, our Most Reverend Shepherd took every opportunity to meet with the clergy and faithful for confession and spiritual discussions.

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On Wednesday, May 25 (Old Style), there took place the customary ecclesiastical reception at the episcopal residence in Vårberg, Stockholm, with the participation of the Reverend Father Anders Åkerström, Hierodeacon Father Theochares, Subdeacon Alexander, and parishioners, to whom His Eminence conveyed the best wishes and love of our Hierarchy and the flock of our Holy Metropolis in Greece. He then served a *Trisagion* at the grave of the ever-memorable Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis (2020).



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On Thursday, May 26 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian and a small group of faithful made a pilgrimage in the footsteps of St. Ansgar, the first known missionary to Sweden, at the once flourishing Viking town of Birka

on the island of Björkö in Lake Mälaren, which was an important cultural and trading center. St. Ansgar arrived at Birka in 829 in response to a request from Swedish King Björn. The local chieftain Herigar received baptism, and not long thereafter he allowed a Church to be built on his property, possibly the first of its kind in Scandinavia.

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On Friday, May 27 (Old Style), His Eminence celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in the university town of Uppsala, with a small group of faithful in prayerful attendance.



Presbytera Birgitta then served everyone a splendid agape meal, after which Father Anders spoke about the ascetic endeavors of St. Ansgar.

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On Saturday, May 28 (Old Style), the Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the humble chapel dedicated to St. Ignatius of Antioch, located in Norrköping, south of Stockholm. Metropolitan Cyprian then heard confessions and offered spiritual counsel to the small community.

That afternoon, Resurrectional Vespers for the Feast of All Saints and of Sts. Constantine and Helen was celebrated, in Greek and Swedish, at the Cathedral Church, followed by the Small Compline and the Akathist Hymn to the Saints being honored, concluding with the prayers before Holy Communion.



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On Sunday of All Saints, May 29 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian presided at the **Patronal Feast of the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen,** with the participation of Father Anders Åkerström, Father Stefanos Jaerpenberg, and Hierodeacon Father Theochares, together with the parish's multi-ethnic flock, many of whom communed of the Immaculate Mysteries.



In his homily, His Eminence spoke about *the calling of every believer to holiness, not as a form of moral perfection, but as the charism of becoming a god by Grace. This lofty calling requires of us that we commit ourselves wholly to our Lord—a dedication primarily of our nous (mind), which must remain “sovereign” of our being. For this purpose we are given the gift of time, which we ought to use for the asceticism of prayer and of the various evangelical commandments, and also for participation in the Immaculate Mysteries, that we might become receptive to the Grace of the Holy Spirit and a dwelling-place of the Holy Trinity.*

The spirit of the world assails us, however, with its innumerable “activities,” and by ensnaring our senses and imposing ideologies of apostasy, such that our mind becomes confused and loses its purity, rendering it incapable of communing with God.

We are called, with the help of our Most Holy Mother and all the Saints, by the power of the Cross, to live a life centered on the Cross, with great vigilance and constantly keeping in mind our responsibility with regard to time, so that we may experience our personal resurrection and reach the likeness of God...

Metropolitan Cyprian, after noting that the parish of Sts. Constantine and Helen was founded forty-five years ago, thanked the Reverend Father Anders on behalf of our Holy Synod and Diocese and bestowed on him an *Epigonation* and a vestment case in recognition of over twenty-five years of pastoral service, wishing him health, length of days, and zeal in Christ.



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.



That evening, there took place the customary parish Synaxis, during which Metropolitan Cyprian returned to the theme of deification and the importance of using

our time wisely, given that our relationship with God is cultivated within time. We must not allow our various cares to diminish our spiritual and bodily strength in our spiritual struggle.



His Eminence also spoke about the power of prayer, and in particular the reading of the Psalter for our various petitions, as well as the special protection given by the Most Holy Theotokos to all those who express their love for her in their daily lives.

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On Monday, May 30 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian went to the large Skogskyrkogården cemetery, where he served *Trisagia* at the grave of Mother Parthenia and those of several other parishioners.



That afternoon, His Eminence had a very edifying meeting with the clergy, during which he discussed matters pertaining to our Church's mission in Sweden.

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On Tuesday, May 31 (Old Style), our Most Reverend Metropolitan liturgized together with our clergy at the Convent of St. Philothei of Athens, located in Villberga, Grillby.



Following the Divine Liturgy and the *Trisagion* at the grave of the Convent's foundress, Mother Philothei of blessed memory († 2012), everyone sat down to an outdoor *agape* meal.

His Eminence remained the rest of the day at the convent. After visiting the nearby cemetery together with the nuns to serve *Trisagia* at the graves of Zacharias, Elizabeth, and Marjo, he strengthened the sisters in their spiritual struggle for genuine repentance under the shelter and guidance of our Most Holy Mother of God.

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On Wednesday, June 1 (Old Style), Metropolitan Cyprian and his travelling companions returned to Greece, praying that our Lord bless the seed of Genuine Orthodoxy in the fertile hearts of our brothers and sisters in the North.

