



## “For the Edification of the Church”

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

## Pilgrimage and Visit to the Rural Detention Facility of Kassaveteia March 16, 2025 (Old Style)



**O**n the Fourth Sunday of Great Lent, March 16, 2025 (Old Style), by the Grace of God, His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle made his sixteenth visit, together with a group of over forty faithful, to the Rural Detention Facility

of Kassaveteia, near the city of Volos, in northern Greece.

The St. Philaret the Merciful Guild once again organized this pastoral and social activity, preparing care packages for 205 inmates that contained items donated to the Guild by private individuals and stores.

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**During** the bus ride, following the customary morning prayers, the Supplicatory Canon to St. Philaret, and the prayer for visiting our incarcerated brothers, Metropolitan Cyprian read the Life and Martyrdom of the New Martyr Anna Kaloyan, who converted to the Orthodox faith in the autumn of 2012, for which she was martyred at the hands of her Kurdish Yezidi parents just before Christmas of the same year.

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**Around** 11 a.m. the pilgrims arrived at the Rural Detention Facility,





where they were met by Ms. Evgenia (one of the two social workers) and the inmates, first in a hall and then in three courtyards.

The first meeting, with the working inmates, took place in the facility's large hall, which is designed to accommodate primary and secondary school classes and to host events.

Ms. Evgenia warmly welcomed the visitors and told them about the daily life of the working inmates, their contribution to their community, and their internal rehabilitation, which can only be observed by the social workers, and about which it is difficult to convince the judges, who concern themselves with files and not with people.

Addressing the inmates words of love and encouragement, His Eminence urged them to support each other, and bestowed on each of them an embrace of paternal love, as well as care packs containing simple but necessary items and some spiritual gifts. All the while, the young pilgrims sang folk songs accompanied by a lyre. One of the inmates responded by singing a song of "exile" from northwestern Greece.

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Ms. Evgenia, then led some of the visitors to three courtyards, two of which house juvenile inmates, whom the social worker described as young people that are angry at society and particularly restless.

Their coexistence is not easy owing to the tensions caused by their confinement: their wards accommodate twelve young people at a time and they are closed between 6:30 p.m. and 7 a.m.

His Eminence once again shared prayerful wishes, exhortations, paternal love, and small gifts with everyone, to the sound of Greek folk songs. In two of the three courtyards, the inmates, usually "unruly and insubordinate elements," took the opportunity to start up a dance, carefree and happy, like children that they are, for a few minutes....

All of our incarcerated brothers expressed their gratitude both for the support of the social workers and the visitors from Athens.





Finally, the group venerated the Icons in the chapel dedicated to St. Eleftherios, in the central courtyard of the detention center, giving thanks to God for this moving experience. His Eminence urged everyone to keep the prisoners and their caretakers in their daily prayers.

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**The** group of pilgrims returned home deeply affected by the lessons learned from visiting these “least brethren” of our Lord in prison, and reflecting on the shared responsibility of all of us for the “anger” of those young people....

**“Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”**

(Hebrews 13:3)

