



“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 Detention Center of Amphissa †Saturday, September 10, 2017 (Old Style)



On Saturday, September 10, 2017 (Old Style), following the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, there took place, under Her protection, our eleventh visit to the Detention Center of Amphissa, with the blessing, guidance, and participa-

tion of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian.

For the first time, the visit to our “incarcerated” Lord, in the person of 145 of our imprisoned 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 items to meet the prisoners’ basic and personal needs. These items were kindly donated to our Guild by its various sponsors, private individuals, and stores.



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The group arrived early at the Detention Center, where they were greeted by the gracious director of the facility and one of the social workers, who led them into the inner courtyard where the inmates were gathered. Some of them

were by now familiar to the visitors, and acquainted with the “ceremony” of these visits.

At the encouragement of Metropolitan Cyprian, the Routse family, joined by other children, once again played and sang Greek folk songs, to which visitors and inmates, visibly moved, clapped along in time.

Our Most Reverend Shepherd then spoke words of greetings and encouragement to our brothers, whom he exhorted, among other things, to live together in harmony and cooperation, so that their experience at the facility would be more tolerable and brighter, and would prepare them to be good examples when they return to their families.



Father Soterios, with his warm and heartfelt words, contributed to the familial atmosphere, and he invited our brothers to the microphone to express their feelings spontaneously. The majority of them stressed how much strength, hope, and even trust in God they were given by the realization that some people think about them, visit them, and pray for them.

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Following this protracted meeting, our Most Reverend Shepherd went with the others into the visiting hall where, at an even more personal level, he gave each of the inmates, one by one, the humble care packages, along

with his paternal love and consolation, his smile, and his message of hope.

At his side, Father Soterios distributed small Icons, Crosses, and prayer ropes, which our imprisoned brothers accepted with gratitude.

Two of them returned to offer to His Eminence an Icon of our Crucified Lord—a particularly meaningful gift to those offering it, but also to the recipient....

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After the customary photograph with the members of the administration and the exchange of gifts of love and gratitude, His Eminence and the group of pilgrims left for the nearby town of Itea, where they ate by the waterfront, enjoying the food prepared by the volunteers, the glorious view of the gulf, and the songs once again sung by the enthusiastic and tireless children.

At Thebes, the pilgrims first went to the Church of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke, located in the city's old cemetery. Here, they venerated the ancient stone sepulchre, wherein lay the Relics of the Holy Evangelist until the year 357.

It was then that the Emperor Constantius, son of St. Constantine the Great, entrusted St. Artemios, the military gov-





ernor of Egypt, with the task of transferring the Relics of St. Luke to the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople. In 1204, they were stolen by the Crusaders and taken to Padova, Italy.

Next to the sepulchre is a marble reliquary, where the faithful venerated a small portion of these Relics, which were returned from Padova on September 4, 2000 (Old Style).

The group then went to the historic and wondrous Church of the *Megali Panagia*, located in the center of the city, where they venerated the wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God, which, according to tradition, was painted by the Holy Evangelist Luke.

The Theotokos poured out her motherly Grace in abundance on the pious pilgrims, who gratefully chanted various compunctious hymns to her in front of her Icon.

With this final pilgrimage, shortly after the Feast of her Nativity, the Mother of God filled everyone's heart with consolation, hope, and thanksgiving.

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Once again, "what can we render to our Lord" and His All-venerable Mother for the manifold blessings of the day?

May these heavenly seeds of Divine Grace find good soil in the hearts of our imprisoned brothers and those who visited them, bringing forth salvific fruits of repentance.

