



“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

December 3, 2017 (Old Style)

On Saturday, December 3, 2017 (Old Style, commemoration of the Holy Prophet Sophonios, and the third Saturday of the Nativity Fast), with the blessing, participation, and guidance of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, we made our twelfth visit to the Special Detention Center for Youth in Volos, northern Greece.



As always, the self-sacrificing members of the St. Philaret the Merciful charitable guild organized and made the necessary preparations for this visit to seventy-seven of our imprisoned brothers.

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During the journey to the Detention Center, we read the customary morning prayers and the Supplicatory Canon to St. Philaret, as well as a special prayer of intercession on visiting correctional facilities.

Metropolitan Cyprian also read excerpts from a very timely sermon by Theodoros Zographou, in which the theologian describes how, at the beginning of the last century, a lay sisterhood in Volos responded to the evangelical exhortation of our Lord:

“I was in prison and ye came unto Me” (St. Matthew 25:36). Thus, we see that the work of our own guild lies within a tradition not only of similar activities, but also of spirit—and that, coincidentally, in the very city of Volos to which we were heading.



On our return journey, as is also our custom, we chanted Great Vespers and read the Small Compline, as well as a prayer of thanksgiving after visiting a correctional facility.

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At the Detention Center, our Archpastor, joined by the group of pilgrims, met with our young brothers, to whom he offered his paternal embrace of love, words of encouragement, and a bag containing items to meet their basic and personal needs. He was assisted by Father Soterios and the members of the guild, while the nuns chanted hymns and the Routse family sang Christmas carols and folk songs.

Especially moving was the sight of one of the young men, who dissolved into tears and could not break himself away from the paternal embrace. From Bulgaria, he confessed that he had never known the love of a father.

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On leaving the prison, the pilgrims visited for the third time, with the blessing of the local Hierarch, His Eminence, Metropolitan Photios of Demetrias, the Convent of the Life-Giving Spring, in Rizomylo Belestinou, which is steadily being restored. After visiting the Church, they ate lunch at the convent, thanking the Lord for the spiritual and material gifts they received.

Once again, we close with glorification and thanksgiving for this twofold pilgrimage that we were vouchsafed to make by our merciful Lord in the period of the Fast, in an atmosphere of love and joy in Christ, thereby rekindling our zeal for Orthodox volunteerism and the cultivation of companionship within our spiritual family.

