

Pastoral Visit to the Holy Diocese of Stockholm, Sweden

May 15-21, 2014 (Old Style)

At a meeting of the Holy Synod on April 15/28, 2014, the Church of the True Orthodox Christians of Greece established the Holy Diocese of Stockholm, Sweden, which has within its boundaries all of the Scandinavian lands. Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle was designated as *Locum Tenens* thereof.



• In my new capacity as *Locum Tenens*, I visited the newly established Holy Diocese of Stockholm, arriving on Wednesday, May 15 [Old Style], the *Apodosis* of Pascha, and was met at the airport by the local clergy and a number of parishioners. Accompanying me were eleven members of the faithful from Greece: one Subdeacon, one Priest with his Presbytera, two nuns, and six laypeople from among our spiritual children.



At the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen, the Equals to the Apostles (in Vårberg, Stockholm), which also serves as the Episcopal residence, the *Locum Tenens* was received according to a special *Typikon*, in the presence of an un-

usually large crowd of faithful.

We all made a visit to His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis, who has been bedridden for several years and has now retired from his Episcopal duties. A light supper followed.



We then celebrated Great Ves-

pers for the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, at which the *Locum Tenens* presided, assisted by three Priests: Father Angelos (from Greece) and Fathers Anders and Stefanos (from Sweden); one Deacon, Hierodeacon Theochares (from Sweden); and one Subdeacon, Monk Antonios (from Greece), with a fair number of faithful in prayerful attendance.

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The next day, Thursday, May 16, the Feast of the Ascension, we went to the Convent of St. Philothei of Athens, in Villberga (approximately one hour northwest of Stockholm), where Mother Magdalene (of Swedish origin) and Sister Lydia

(originally from the United States) reside.

A festal Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was celebrated, with the participation of all the aforementioned clergy and a large number of faithful in attendance.

At the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, a special prayer was read over the nun responsible for the convent,



Mother Magdalene, so that she will now serve as its *Gerontissa* (“Eldress,” but not Abbess).

After the festal luncheon, the visitors from Greece headed north and, after a journey of two hours,





arrived in the town of Järbo, in the vicinity of which lies the large farm owned by two of our spiritual children, who have built a wonderful Chapel in honor of St. Joseph the Betrothed on their property.

We visited and inspected the chapel, since the next day we would be celebrating the very first Divine Liturgy there.

After a light supper, we returned to town for the night.

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On the morning of Friday, May 17, we all returned to celebrate, according to a specially written service, the *Thyranoixia* (“Opening of the Doors”) of the newly built chapel, followed immediately thereafter by the Divine Liturgy, at which Fathers Angelos and Anders concelebrated with the *Locum Tenens*, assisted by Hierodeacon Theochares and Subdeacon Antonios.



After lunch, at which we had the opportunity for an edifying and interesting conversation of a primarily catechetical nature, we returned to Stockholm.

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The next day, Saturday, May 18, we once again drove north, to the famed university town of Uppsala, approximately one hour from the capital, where all of the clergy liturgized at the Church of the Dormition of the *Theotokos*.

It was particularly moving that, thirty years after the first visit of our Elder, Metropolitan Cyprian, of blessed memory (†May 17,



2013), to this country, we now served his annual Memorial Service in this Church.

Following a meal at the house of the Church's Rector, Father Anders, we returned to the Episcopal residence in Stockholm, where we celebrated Great Vespers in honor of Sts. Constantine and Helen, with many faithful in attendance. We then read the Small Compline and the Salutations to the Saints being honored.



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On Sunday, May 19, we celebrated the Patronal Feast of the Church, having transferred the Feast Day from Tuesday the 21st, which would be a workday and therefore not a propitious time for



such an event. The festivities, which included full Orthros, the Divine Liturgy, and a procession around the Church, were completed by 1 p.m.

There were many faithful of various nationalities in attendance, and three languages were used for the services: Greek, Swedish, and Slavonic. At the end of the Divine Liturgy, the *Locum Tenens* spoke about St. Constantine the Great, who is honored as a model of pious Kings and a defender of Orthodoxy (the day of his commemoration coincided with the commemoration of the First Holy Œcumenical Synod). The Saint reminds us of our own “royal” or “aristocratic” qualities, given



that we participate in the Royal dignity of our Lord through Baptism, Chrismation, and Holy Communion; since Royal Blood flows through us, we must live “as royals and sovereigns”: we must be sovereigns over ourselves and not prey to our passions and sins.

In addition, the Synodal resolution regarding the establishment of a new Diocese and the appointment of a *Locum Tenens* was announced and elucidated.

That evening, a gathering with the faithful was held in the meet-



ing hall of the Episcopal residence, where the fundamental passion of self-justification, which hinders true repentance and love, and thus also true sociability, was examined and analyzed in depth in a joint discussion.

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The next day, Monday, May 20, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated at the Episcopal residence in the morning. The rest of the day was taken up exclusively with three meetings, in order to deal with various problems (practical and pastoral, among others) that the Diocese is facing.



During the first meeting, I spoke with Father Anders Åkerström, who has been appointed Episcopal Representative.

During the second meeting, I spoke with Father Spyridon Tanous, a Syrian Priest, who lives and is active in Skara, in western Sweden.

During the third meeting, I spoke with certain of the more active members of the parish, primarily about practical and organizational matters.

On Monday evening, we celebrated a small Agrypnia in honor of the actual Feast Day of Sts. Constantine and Helen, and on Tuesday, May 21, around noon, we departed by air for Athens.

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Glory to God! This was a very interesting pastoral visit, and one with new dimensions in view of the establishment of a Diocese.

- Owing to the prolonged infirmity of His Grace, Bishop Johannes of Makarioupolis, the founder of the mission in Sweden and



an indefatigable missionary worker in this country for some thirty years, a great deal of spiritual, pastoral, and organizational work is needed for the strengthening and expansion of our missionary presence in Scandinavia, where Lutheranism is becoming ever more de-Christianized, and Islam is increasing and spreading dramatically.

There is ample scope for missionary work on behalf of True Orthodoxy in these lands, especially since many immigrants from Orthodox countries have settled here.

June 5, 2014 (Old Style)
Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle