

Feast Day of Orthodox Parish of Saints Mena the Great Martyr and Ephraim the New Martyr in Sedegliano, Udine



With profound spiritual joy the Orthodox Parish of the of Saints Menas the Great Martyr and Ephraim the New Martyr – the Wonderworkers in Sedegliano-Udine celebrated its winter patronal feast, giving praise to God and honouring Saint Menas the Great Martyr, venerated for his miraculous powers and steadfast confession of the Orthodox faith.

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Polykarpos of Italy and Exarch of Southern Europe, the celebration drew numerous devout participants, uniting faithful of all ages from across the region and guests from abroad, who gathered in a spirit of prayer and communion to honour Saint Menas.

The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was conducted in Italian, Romanian, Greek, and Ukrainian, and was presided over by His Grace Athenagoras of Therme and Auxiliary Bishop of Metropolitan Polykarpos, and was accompanied by Protopresbyter Petru Filipescu, the parish priest, and Protopresbyter Dionisie Vidigh, serving priest of the parish.

In the presence of over 120 faithful, the atmosphere of prayer and unity was enhanced by the simplicity and beauty of floral arrangements provided by the

“Garden of the Mother of God – Regenerative Community Garden,” an ecological parish project symbolising the love for God’s creation and bearing witness to the responsibility of every Orthodox Christian to protect the world they inhabit. Among the faithful were many children of all ages, whose voices and laughter added a unique vitality to the festive atmosphere, reminding the community of the joy of innocence and the essential care for the new generation, which will carry Orthodox traditions into the future.

In his homily, Bishop Athenagoras conveyed the blessings of Metropolitan Polykarpos and extolled the sacrificial witness of Saint Menas, highlighting the saint’s rejection of worldly glory in order to follow Christ, even at the cost of his life. “The power of sacrifice and witness to faith shines in the life of Saint Mina, a model of dedication and devotion to Christ. His courage, manifested through the refusal of any compromise, demonstrates that true victory stems from the strength of the spirit and union with God,” stated His Grace, urging the community toward an unshakeable faith akin to that of Saint Menas. This reflection on the virtues of the Saint was met with deep reverence and gratitude by those present.

His Grace also spoke on the parable of the Good Samaritan, an exemplar of sacrificial love towards one’s neighbour. “The question ‘Who is my neighbour?’ calls us to open our hearts to all in need, without discrimination. The Good Samaritan is a portrayal of Christ, who bends down to lift us up through His love,” His Grace expounded, emphasising the call for each believer to embrace this unconditional love as a manifestation of authentic service. His words were enriched with interpretations from the Church Fathers, such as Saint Cyril of Alexandria and Saint Ambrose.

In a spirit of praise and gratitude, His Grace Bishop Athenagoras expressed personal appreciation for the parish’s commitment to environmental stewardship, noting the outstanding initiatives undertaken here. “The Garden of the Mother of God – Regenerative Community Garden,” along with the parish’s recently reopened Ecological School, represents a testimony of Christian faith through care for God’s creation and the cultivation of ecological awareness among the young. These initiatives have received the full support of the Metropolis, reinforced by the guidance of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, known as the ‘Green Patriarch.’ “Care for God’s creation is not merely an act of respect for nature, but a living testimony of our Orthodox faith,” said His Grace, calling the faithful to embrace and uphold this sacred responsibility.

At the conclusion of the service, the parish priest, Protopresbyter Petru Filipescu, offered heartfelt thanks to all who supported the organisation of the feast, noting

the significant presence of guests from outside the parish, including those from abroad, which brought great spiritual joy to the community. In his remarks, the priest emphasised the importance of cultivating an ecological conscience from childhood, affirming this as a fundamental Orthodox value. "Care for creation is a sacred duty, and ecological awareness must be instilled from a young age. Our children must grow in respect for nature so that stewardship of the Earth becomes a shared value embraced by all," said Father Petru, citing the inspired words of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: "Protection of the environment is a testament to our faith and an expression of our love for God's creation."

This celebration, marked by broad participation and supported by the entire Metropolis, reflects the profound connection between faith and responsibility for the world created by God. Through these initiatives, the Orthodox Parish in Sedegliano stands as a living example of love for Christ and for one's neighbour, fostering a spirit of care for creation and preserving Orthodox values within the modern world.

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