01/12/2025

Pilgrims visit Halki



Faithful participating in the pilgrimage “A Journey to Meet the Ecumenical Patriarch & the Pope of Rome” continued their travels in Constantinople with a boat ride along the Bosphorus bound for the important Halki Patriarchal School of Theology. Perched at the summit of the island’s highest hill, the monastery commands sweeping views of the Sea of Marmara and Istanbul’s skyline.



The Monastery was founded in the late 9th century by St. Photios the Great. In 1844, Patriarch Germanos IV established the Theological School on the Island of Halki which is home to a small community during the winter months. During the summer, the island swells in number with those who commute to their weekend homes.

During a tour of Holy Trinity Church, Archdeacon Dionysios Papiris spoke about the importance of the school to many of the hierarchs of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, “Archbishop Iakovos, Metropolitan Philotheos, Metropolitan Maximos, and Metropolitan Anthony of blessed memory, Metropolitan Isaiah were all students here. They had and continue to have a deep love for the school.” Before his election as Archbishop of America, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros served as abbot while Metropolitan of Bursa. The Archdeacon also said that that during his years as abbot the Archbishop “revived the presence of a monastic brotherhood,” and as Archbishop “he continues to advocate for additional renovations and for the Theological School to reopen.”



Pilgrims also learned about the icons in Holy Trinity Monastery at Halki, including the beautiful 14th century Byzantine icon of the Panaghia and Christ, written on two sides, that had been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York a number of years ago.

For Theologos Voudouris of Saint Sophia Cathedral in Washington, D.C., the visit was especially poignant. “I was moved seeing the historic icons and understanding that over the centuries our Patriarchs saved these icons so that we can now venerate them,” he said.



Voudouris said he joined the pilgrimage because “it is historic.” Though he has visited Constantinople several times, he brought his mother, Artemis, for her first trip. Her grandparents on both sides came from Asia Minor, and she described the visit as a return to her family’s beginnings. “My son wanted to do this for me because I have always wanted to see the place of my roots,” she said. “I feel like all of this is now a part of me.”

Halki stirred strong emotions for her as well. “I loved the icons and the mosaics in the altar; I loved the garden and the view,” she said. “However, it is very sad that our seminary here is still not open.”

orthodoxobserver.org