05/05/2026

Two-Day Anniversary Celebrations at the Stockholm Cathedral



With particular splendor and spiritual reverence, the two-day anniversary events of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia were held, on the occasion of the completion of fifty years since the transfer/donation of the Saint George Cathedral of Stockholm from the “Catholic Apostolic Church” to the Holy Metropolis of Sweden of the Ecumenical Patriarchate; an event constituting a historic and spiritual landmark for the Orthodox presence in Sweden.

On Saturday, May 2nd, 2026, the service of the Resurrectional Vespers took place, presided over by His Grace Bishop Bartholomew of Elaia.
Subsequently, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Bartholomew, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Esphigmenou on Mount Athos, delivered a spiritual address entitled: “The Dynamics of Prayer in the Contemporary Era.”

The address was distinguished by its theological depth, highlighting the importance of ecclesiastical offering, tradition, and the living faith of Mount Athos, as a preeminent place of prayer in the modern world.

The inspired address of the Holy Abbot moved the audience and highlighted the timeless radiance of Athonite monasticism as a beacon of spirituality.

In his response of thanks, His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden and All Scandinavia stated, among other things:
“Most Reverend Holy Abbot, we thank you from the depths of our hearts for responding to the invitation of the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia and for honoring with your presence the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Saint George Cathedral of Stockholm, a sacred place of particular historical and spiritual significance, as fifty years are now completed since its transfer and donation to our local Church.

Your presence in the North constitutes not only an honor, but also a substantial reinforcement of the pastoral and missionary work of our Metropolis.
We express our deepest gratitude for your prayerful support toward the Holy Metropolis of Sweden, which constitutes a living bond of love and unity between Mount Athos and the Orthodox Diaspora.”

A reception followed in the Cathedral Fellowship Hall, in honor of the invited guests and attendees. The preparation of the refreshments was undertaken by Mrs. Alexandra Zorpidou, Mrs. Olga Karapanagiotidou, Mrs. Aikaterini Kalvatzis, Mrs. Spyridoula Karakatsani, Mrs. Maria Mylona, and Mrs. Ioanna Skondra, to whom our hearfelt thanks are expressed.

The anniversary celebrations for the golden jubilee of the Saint George Cathedral of Stockholm culminated in the solemn concelebrated Divine Liturgy (with two bishops), on the Fourth Sunday after Pascha, May 3, 2026, presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas, with the participation of His Grace Bishop Bartholomew of Elaia; the Very Reverend Archimandrites Bartholomew, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Esphigmenou on Mount Athos, and Demetrios Koukoulekidis; the Reverend Protopresbyter Nikolaos Rigas, Assistant Priest of the Parish of Apostle Cleopas in Kalmar; while praying in the Holy Altar was the Reverend Presbyter Georgios Kanakaris, Dean of the Metropolitan Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Oslo.

The hymns were chanted by the volunteer chanters Dr. Andreas Selamsis, Dr. Georgios Sidiras, Mr. Isaak Isaksson, Mr. Ilias Gergi, Mr. Miltos Soultanis, Ms. Eliana

Antoniou, and other members of the Cathedral's Byzantine Choir.

In addition to the large congregation, official representatives of other Christian Denominations and Christian Confessions were also present: the Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See in Sweden, His Excellency Archbishop Julio Murat; the Roman Catholic Cardinal of Stockholm, His Eminence Anders Arborelius; His Grace Bishop Anba Abakir of the Coptic Church, who offered to His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas commemorative gifts, namely a blessing Cross and an icon of Christ; as well as representatives of the "Catholic Apostolic Church."

Also present were Her Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to Sweden, Ms. Ekaterini Fountoulaki; His Excellency the Ambassador of Cyprus to Sweden, Mr. Solon Savva; the Archons Offikialioi of the Great Church of Christ, Messrs. Rafail Poumeyrau and Fredrik Styrlander; Mrs. Kyriaki Papadopoulou and Fotini Batsela, Members of the Metropolis Executive Board; the current and former Presidents of the Greek School of Stockholm, Messrs. Petros Anastasiadis and Georgios Konstantinou, with their spouses; the physicians Dr. Alexandros Georgiadis and Dr. Vasiliki Kakani, Dr. Ioannis Rigopoulos and Dr. Katerina Tzovla; former Members of Parliament Messrs. Nikos Papadopoulos and Roger Haddad; the President of the Panepirotic Society of Stockholm, Mr. Georgios Mokos; the entrepreneurs Messrs. Christos Meletis and Patrick Walsh; and other distinguished guests from Stockholm and Oslo.

The honorable presence of all underscored the spirit of dialogue, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence that is cultivated over time in Swedish society, highlighting the role of the Church as a bridge of communication and unity.

To the joy of this anniversary celebration was added the elevation (cheirothesia) to the rank of Protopresbyter, by His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas, of the until-now Reverend Economos Nikolaos Rigas, a volunteer clergyman of the Holy Metropolis, physician and Director of the Nephrology Department at the Hospital of Kalmar, Sweden, and at the same time Assistant Priest of the local Parish of Apostle Cleopas, who was accompanied by his wife/Presbytera and their two children.
Within the framework of these events, and immediately after the Divine Liturgy and the memorial service for the founders (Ktetorikon Mnemosynon), the presentation of the Anniversary Volume/Commemorative Album was held by His Grace Bishop Bartholomew of Elaia.

The volume was authored by His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden in Greek (800 pages) and English (620 pages), dedicated to the Saint George Cathedral of Stockholm, and published by the Ecclesiastical Organization/Publishing

House of the Apostolic Diakonia of the Church of Greece, under the care and supervision of its Director General, His Excellency Metropolitan Agathangelos of Fanarion, and his esteemed collaborators.

This publication records the historical course of the Cathedral, its contribution to the organization of the Orthodox Community in Sweden, as well as significant testimonies and archival material, with a rich photographic appendix.

In his bilingual address during the book presentation, His Eminence Metropolitan Cleopas stated, among other things:
“With deepest emotion and doxology to the Triune God, we stand today in this sacred Cathedral of the glorious Great Martyr George the Trophy-Bearer, in order to celebrate the completion of fifty years since the first celebration of the Divine Liturgy in this holy place, as well as since its historic transfer to the Holy Metropolis of Sweden and All Scandinavia.

This day does not constitute merely an anniversary celebration, but a living testimony of God’s providence in the course of our local Church, for fifty years ago, amidst difficult circumstances and limited means, the foundations were laid of a spiritual beacon, which since then continuously illuminates the Orthodox faithful in the countries of Scandinavia.

This Cathedral Church is not only an architectural jewel in the center of Stockholm, but above all a ‘harbor of salvation and ark of grace,’ a place where prayer meets history, where memory is transformed into hope, and where the Church becomes consolation for humankind.
Here was celebrated the first Divine Liturgy in the Greek language; generations were baptized; Holy Sacraments were celebrated; and the identity of the Orthodox faithful was strengthened within a multicultural and demanding society.

During these two-day celebrations, with the Resurrectional Vespers, the theological address on the dynamics of prayer, the hierarchical concelebration, the memorial service for the founders, and the presentation of the anniversary volume, we experienced the unity of the Church as the Body of Christ, which lives, prays, and records its journey through time.”

A meal followed in the Cathedral Fellowship Hall, offered by the owners of the restaurant Cypern, Messrs. Nikos Athanasiou and Sakis Kalpakas.
The Holy Metropolis of Sweden expresses its gratitude to Mr. Nikolaos Kitsios, who was responsible for the live broadcast of the events via the Facebook page of the Holy Metropolis, as well as to all those who contributed to the successful

organization of the events, and especially to the participants and invited guests who honored this year’s historic anniversary with their presence.

The completion of fifty years since the donation of the Cathedral of Saint George constitutes not only an occasion for reflection, but also a springboard for the continuation of the pastoral and spiritual work of the Orthodox Church in Scandinavia for the next fifty years.

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