

Larissa: The Outdoor Feast Day Vespers at the Ancient Basilica of Saint Achillios



A large crowd attended on Wednesday, 13 May, the festal Vespers for the sacred commemoration of Saint Achillios, the Myrrh-streaming and Wonderworking Metropolitan of Larissa, at the ancient restored Basilica of Saint Achillios on the hill of the Fortress in Larissa.

At the Vespers service, which was presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Kallinikos of Arta, invited by the local Hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, the clergy of the Metropolis, representatives of local government bodies and authorities, Mr G. Rountas, Member of Parliament for Larissa, Mr G. Toufexis, Director of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Larissa, together with other officials and thousands of residents of Larissa, paid tribute to their forefathers who, by erecting the magnificent Church of Saint Achillios from the fifth century AD, established it as the greatest pilgrimage site in all Thessaly, while also recognising the Saint as the true guardian and protector of Thessaly.

In his sermon, His Eminence Metropolitan Kallinikos of Arta, perfectly capturing the spirit of the city, described the Saint as the refuge of all, capable of receiving their prayers and lifting them up before the throne of God, while also interceding before our God to hear those prayers and grant according to each person's heart. The Metropolitan of Arta congratulated the people of Larissa for the honour they bestow upon their Saint and expressed his amazement at this service, which unites the past with the present and the future.

For his part, the local Hierarch, Metropolitan Ieronymos, after thanking Metropolitan Kallinikos of Arta for making the journey to Larissa in order to grace the Vespers with his presence and proclaim the holy sermon, noted that Metropolitan Kallinikos had also served, before becoming a Metropolitan, at the Cathedral of Saint Peter, patron saint of Argos. Therefore, he understands how each city feels about its Saint, how greatly it honours him, and how much it desires to promote his memory.

Metropolitan Ieronymos also thanked all those who contributed to the evening of the Vespers. First among them, he thanked Mr G. Toufexis, Director of the Ephorate

of Antiquities of Larissa, who permitted the liturgical use of the archaeological site, preparing it appropriately and trusting that the people of Larissa would respect and protect it, as they do in their daily lives. He also thanked the “Byzantine and Municipal Workshop” of the distinguished musicologist Mr Theodosios Diamantis, the oldest Byzantine choir in the city, for the beautiful manner in which it rendered the hymns of the Saint’s feast. Finally, he thanked the Philharmonic Band of the Church of Saint George on Volos Street of the Holy Metropolis, which led both the arrival procession of the Hierarchs and the procession towards the Metropolitan Church of Saint Achillios, performing music and creating an atmosphere of joy and enthusiasm alongside the prayerful solemnity of the service.

Following the conclusion of Vespers, all those present proceeded in procession to the Metropolitan Church of Saint Achillios, where the reliquary containing the holy relics of the Saint was opened and their veneration commenced. It is noted that during the three-day celebration, the old icon of Saint Achillios, dating from 1794 and recently restored, has also been placed for veneration. Following the conclusion of the festivities, the icon will again be placed into safekeeping.

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Immediately after the opening of the reliquary, a sacred Vigil was celebrated by the fathers of the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon in Agia, who had come with the permission and blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Ignatios of Demetrias and Almyros in order to offer their own liturgical reverence to the Hierarch Saint.

The Divine Liturgy was presided over by the Abbot of the Monastery, Archimandrite Nikodemos, assisted by the fathers of the Monastery. The chanting was likewise undertaken by the monastics of the Monastery of Saint Panteleimon in Agia, who chanted in a unique manner, creating moments of spiritual uplift and edification of soul. Before the dismissal, the kollyva of the Saint was blessed, the preparation of which had been undertaken by Mr Evripidis Vlachakis, an assistant of the Church.













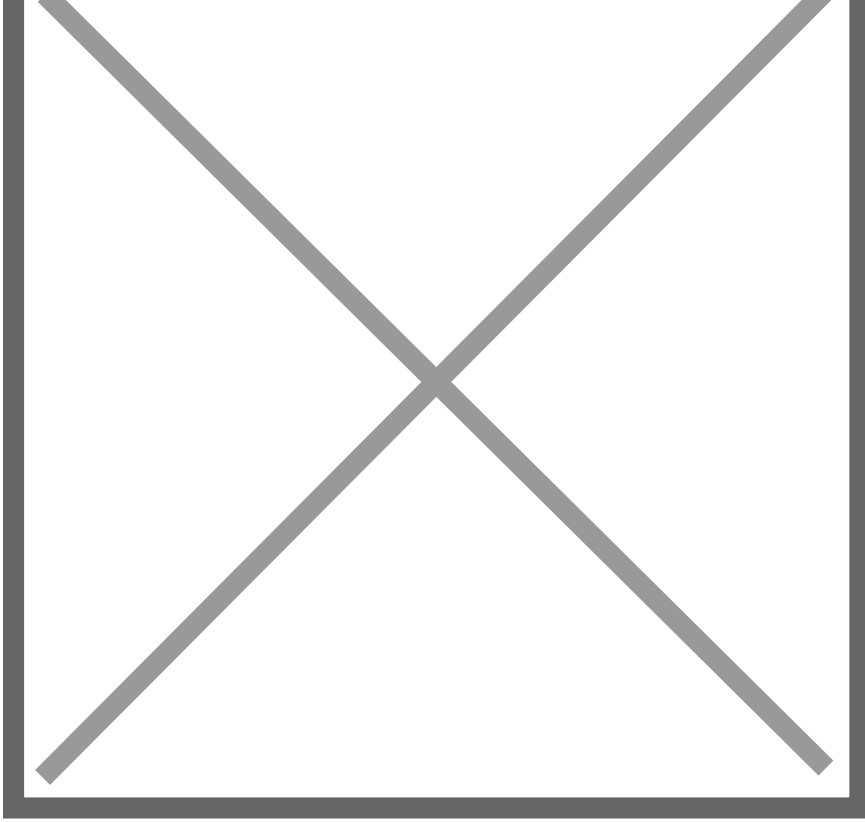








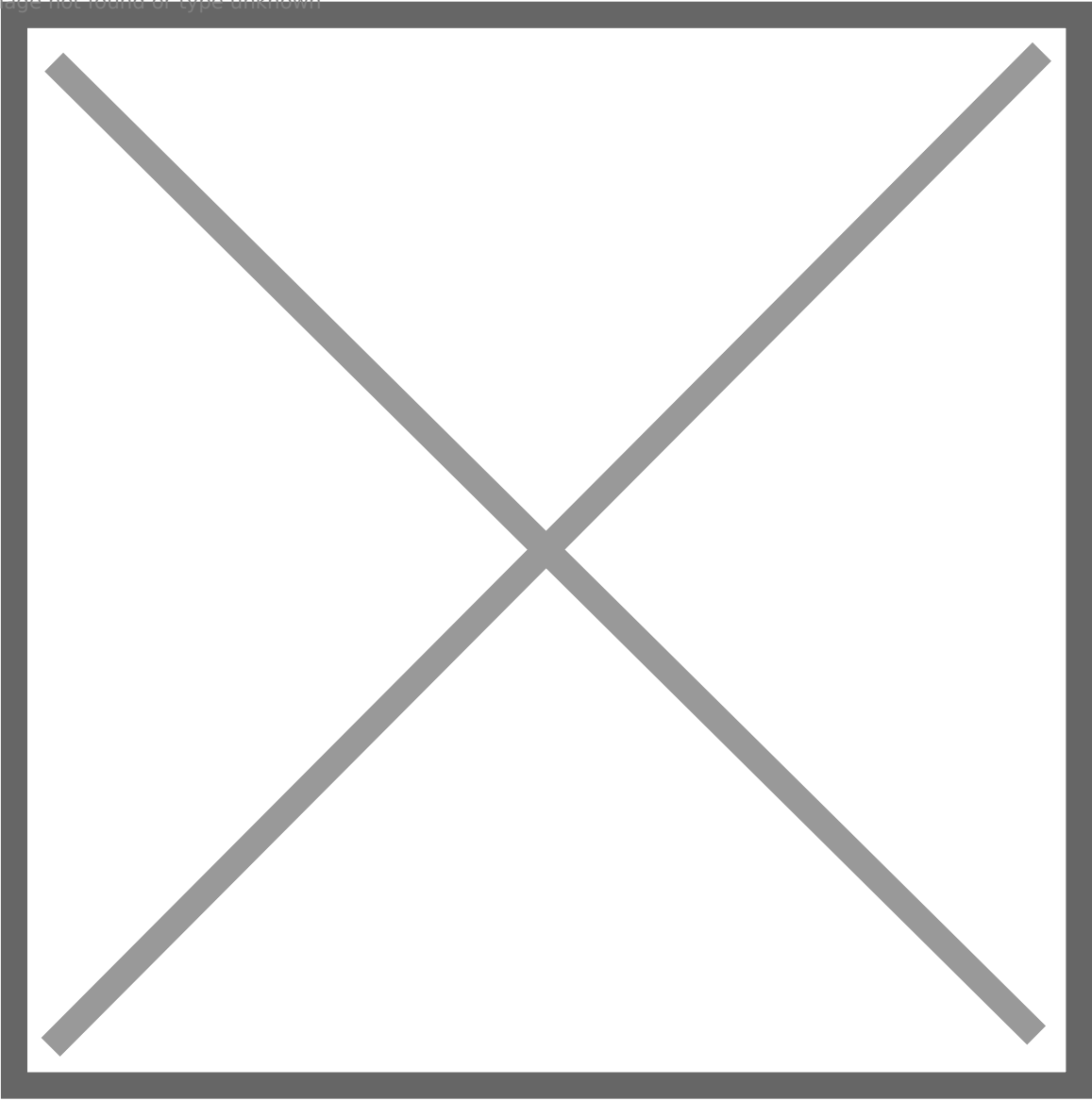








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