

The Ecumenical Patriarch presided over the Feast of the Church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Stavrodromi



On Wednesday evening, 20 May, the Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Bartholomew, presided at the Great Vespers celebrated at the festal Church of Saints Constantine and Helen of the Great Community of Stavrodromi.

The Ecumenical Patriarch was formally welcomed by the Hierarchical Head of the Community, His Eminence Metropolitan Andreas of Forty Churches, to which the Patriarch responded appropriately.

The Patriarchal address follows:

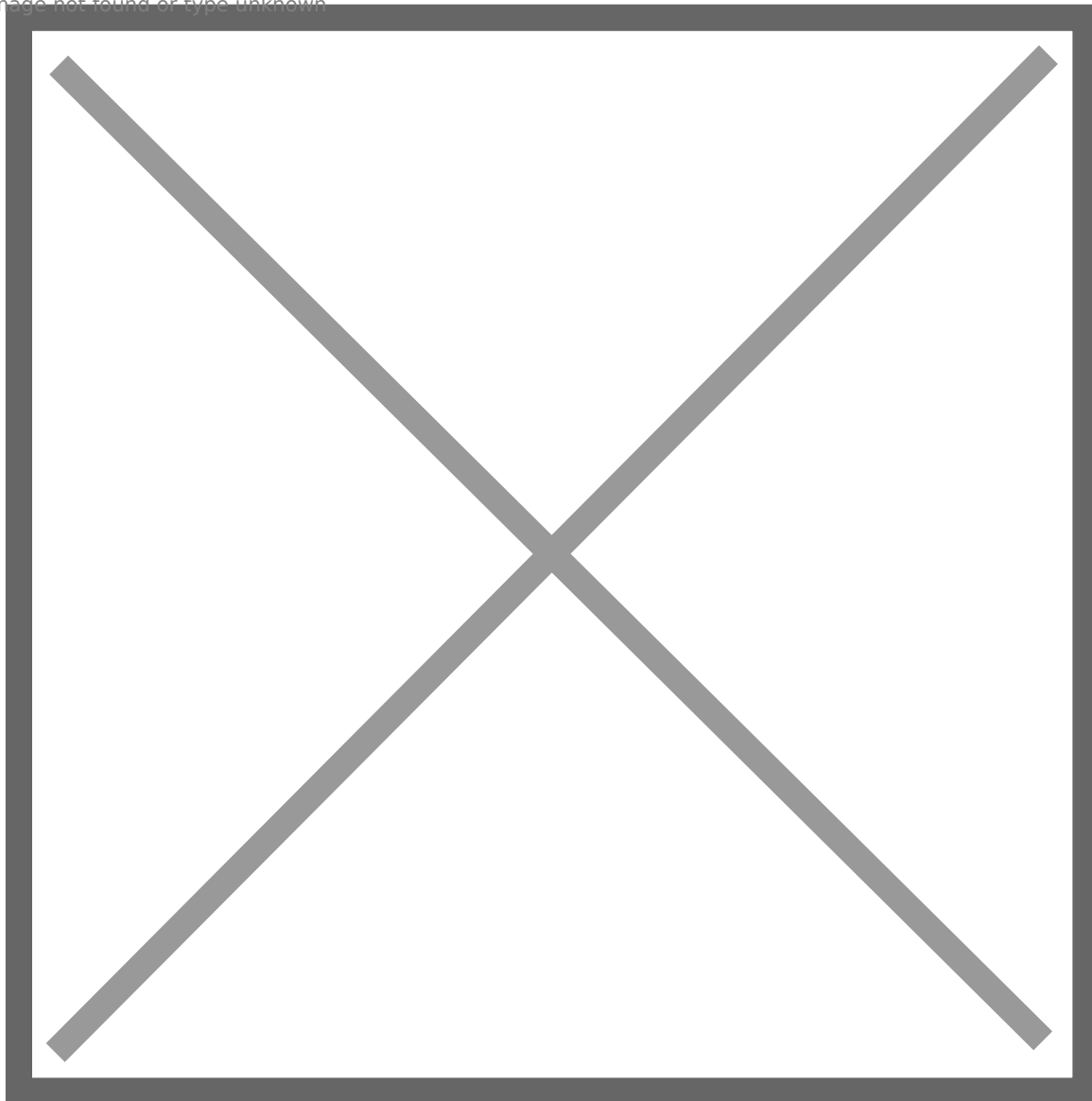
Your Eminence Metropolitan Andreas of Forty Churches, Hierarchical Head of the District of Stavrodromi,
Most Reverend brother Hierarchs,
Reverend Fathers,
Your Excellency Mr Ambassador,
Honourable Archons,
Beloved children in the Lord,

Tomorrow's feast of the Holy God-crowned Sovereigns and Equal-to-the-Apostles Constantine and Helen reminds us of the Cross of the Lord, the sign of which was seen in the heavens by the founder of our City, Constantine the Great, and which, namely the true Precious Cross, was discovered in Jerusalem by his mother, Saint Helen. The coinciding celebration tomorrow also of the great Feast of the Ascension of the Lord reminds us that the Cross and Resurrection of Christ were followed by His glorious Ascension into the heavens, when He sat triumphantly "at the right hand of the Father."

Thus, the providential coincidence this year of these two feasts symbolically expresses the life of the Christian, and especially the life of the Orthodox Romios Christian of this City, which is an alternation of crucifying and resurrectional days and circumstances. Such alternation gives us, or rather ought to give us,

encouragement and optimism, strength and hope for the patient endurance of the former, since they shall be followed by the latter, the resurrectional realities. Tomorrow morning, during Matins, we shall hear once again in the hymn “Having Beheld the Resurrection of Christ,” after the reading of the Third Resurrection Gospel, that “through the Cross alone joy has come into all the world.”

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Yet even if the resurrection should seem delayed, the Christian who consciously believes in Christ Crucified, Risen, and Ascended should in no way be shaken or discouraged. On the contrary, he must repeat the words of Paul: “God forbid that I should glory except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14), and “for the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

This is the lesson we draw from the coincidence of these two feasts and receive as

a provision for our life: faith in the Cross of Christ, through which “all things are made new,” and from which arise life, resurrection, and ascension.

With the certainty, therefore, that we are not alone, but that the Lord who ascended in glory from among us into the heavens remains continually with us, let us continue the struggle of our life as Romioi of this City of Constantine the Great, with courage, with love for all, with hope for a better tomorrow, with gratitude to God for all that He has granted you, even for the sorrows and afflictions of life. The Apostle Paul tells us: “To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” (Phil. 1:29). We underline the word “granted,” which means that suffering for Christ is also grace, a gift, a divine and sacred privilege.

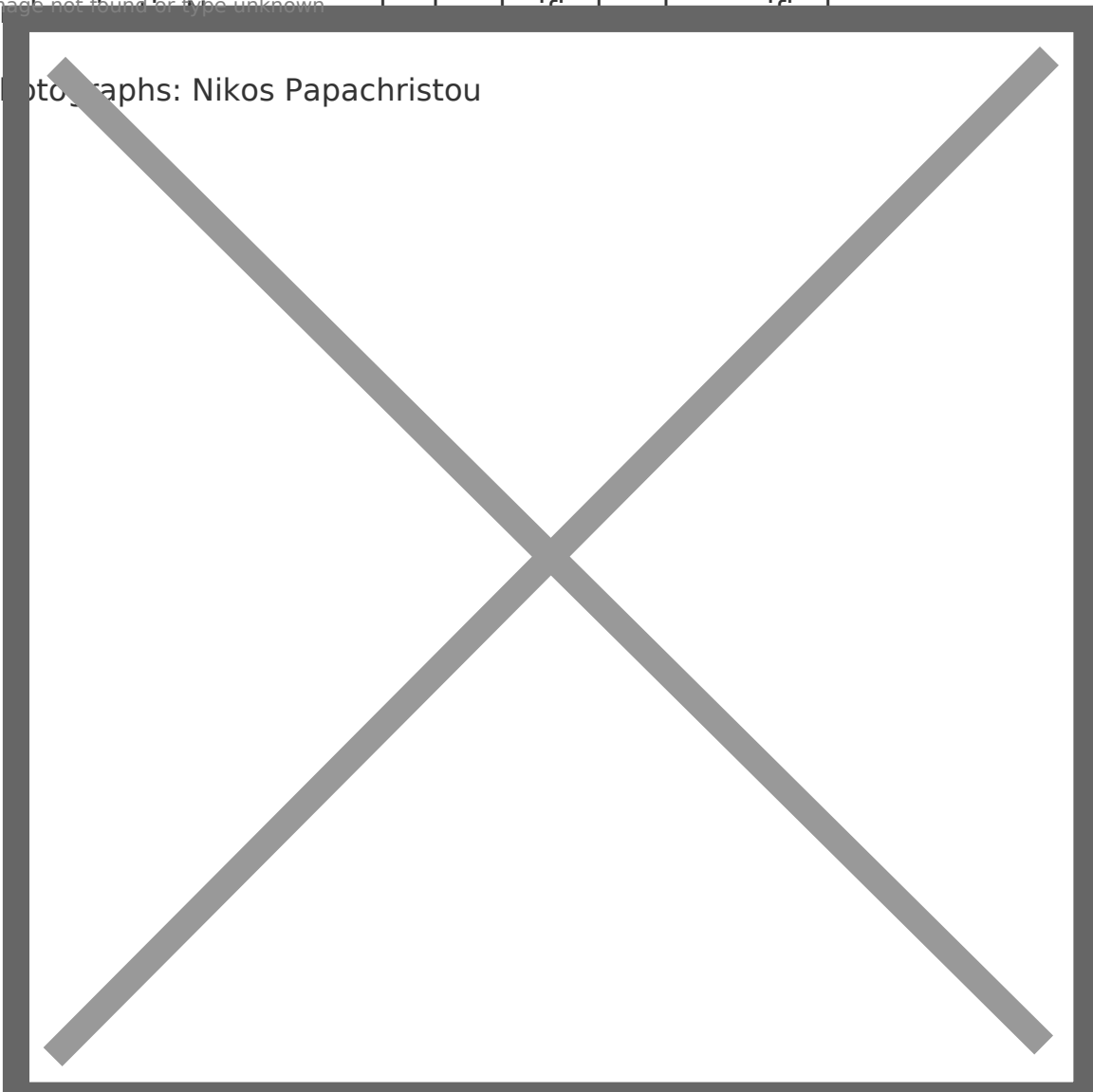


Concluding our words, we wish to express the satisfaction of the Mother Church and of ourselves personally toward His Eminence and beloved brother Metropolitan

Andreas of Forty Churches, Hierarchical Head of this District, for his tireless and unceasing ministry in this portion of our Most Holy Archdiocese of Constantinople. We also congratulate His Grace Bishop Benjamin of Trallee and the sacred clergy of the District for their faithful ministry under the supervision and guidance of the Metropolitan of Forty Churches,. Likewise, we Patriarchally commend the honourable Community Committee of this Great Community of Stavrodromi, under the exemplary presidency of the Honourable Archon Laosynaktis of the Holy Great Church of Christ, Mr Georgios Papaliaris, who has sacrificially devoted himself for many years to the sacred rights and interests of our Greek Orthodox Community, as well as all the supporters of the work of this beloved Community, in which the spirit and teaching of the Cross, adorning the icons of the two God-crowned Sovereigns, is embodied and expressed.

Upon all the devout pilgrims gathered here we invoke the grace of the holy mother and son, the God-crowned Sovereigns and Equal-to-the-Apostles Saints Constantine and Helen, and we wish many years to those celebrating, especially to the prayerfully participating, His Excellency Ambassador Constantine Koutras, Consul General of Greece in Constantinople. We bless you all from the heart with paternal love. And we pray that all the gifts of our Lord who ascended in glory may abound in your life and in the works of your hands, so that through you His all-honourable

Photographs: Nikos Papachristou







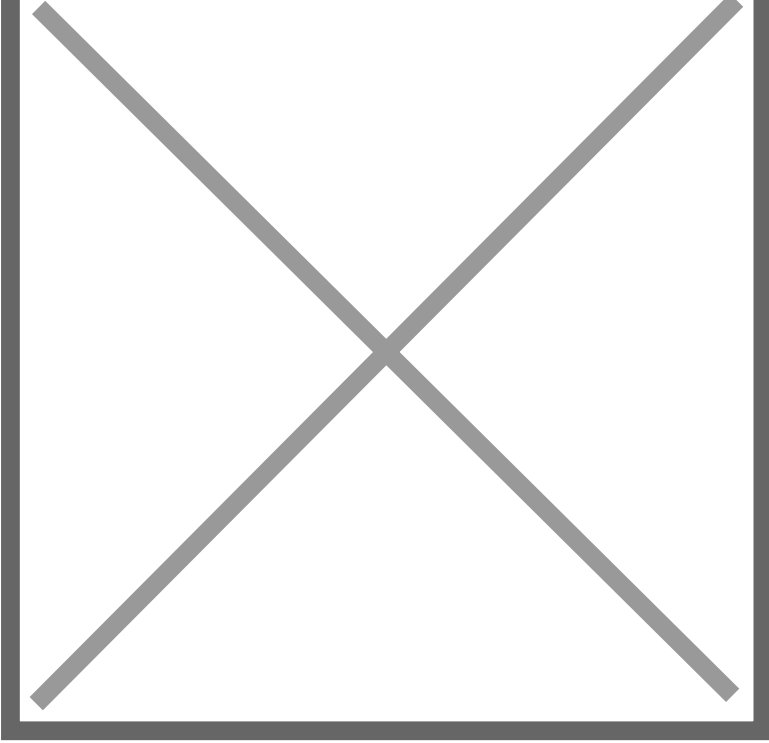
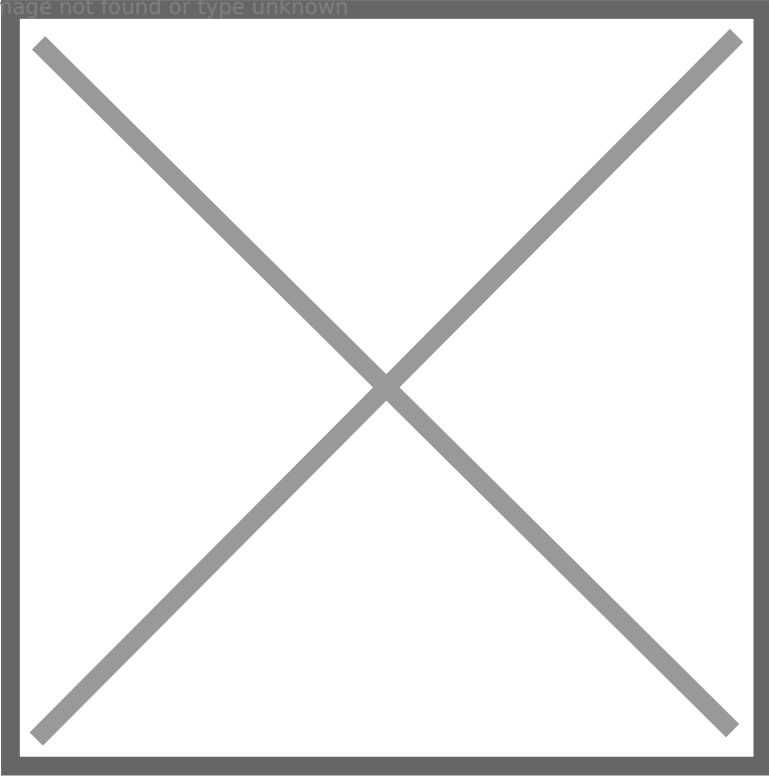
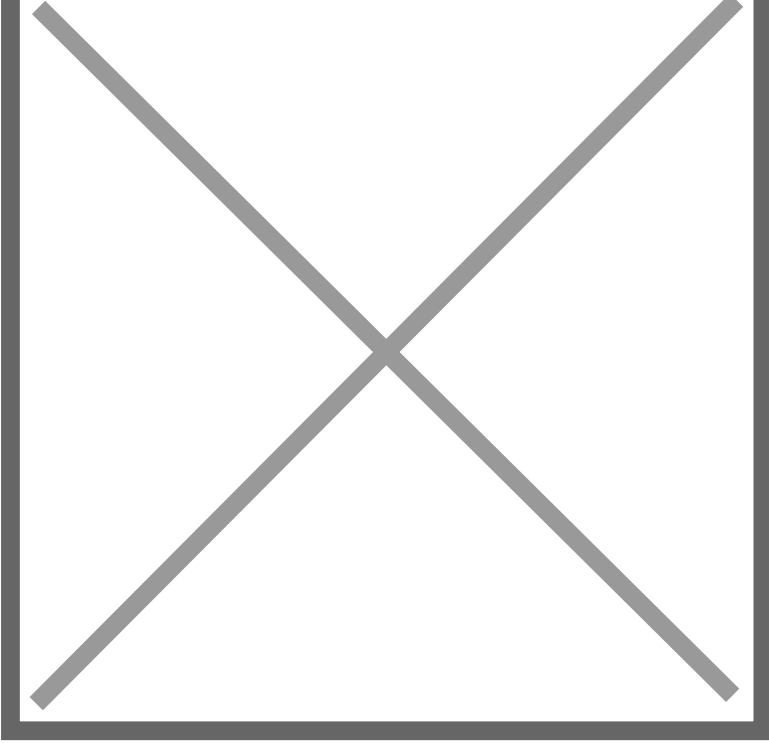


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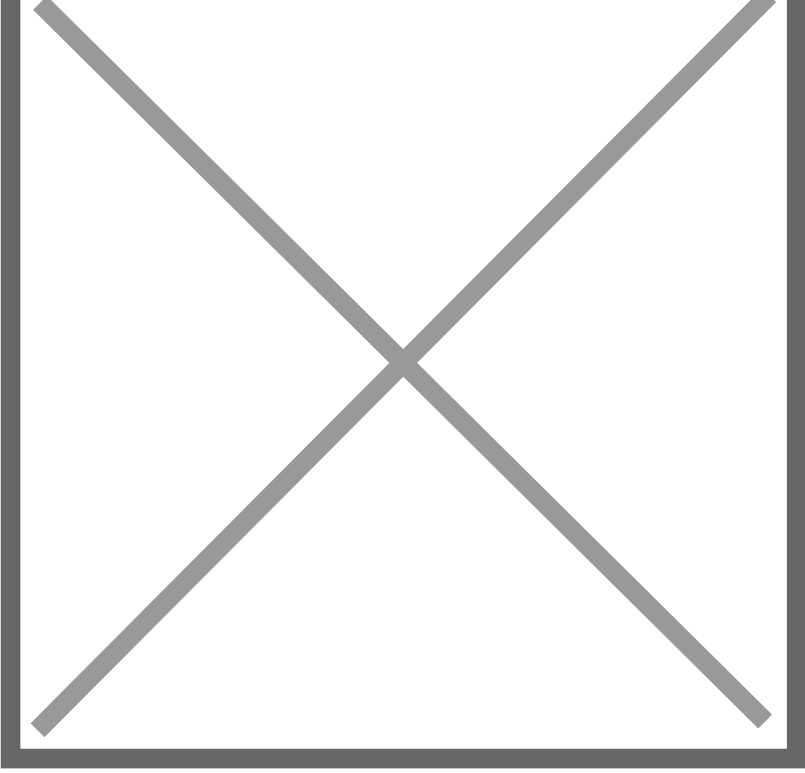
















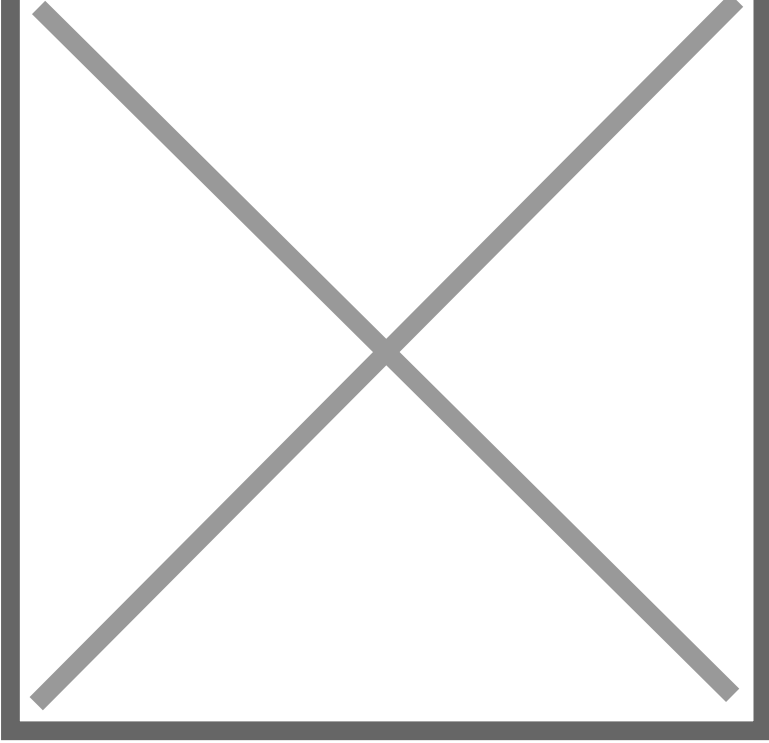
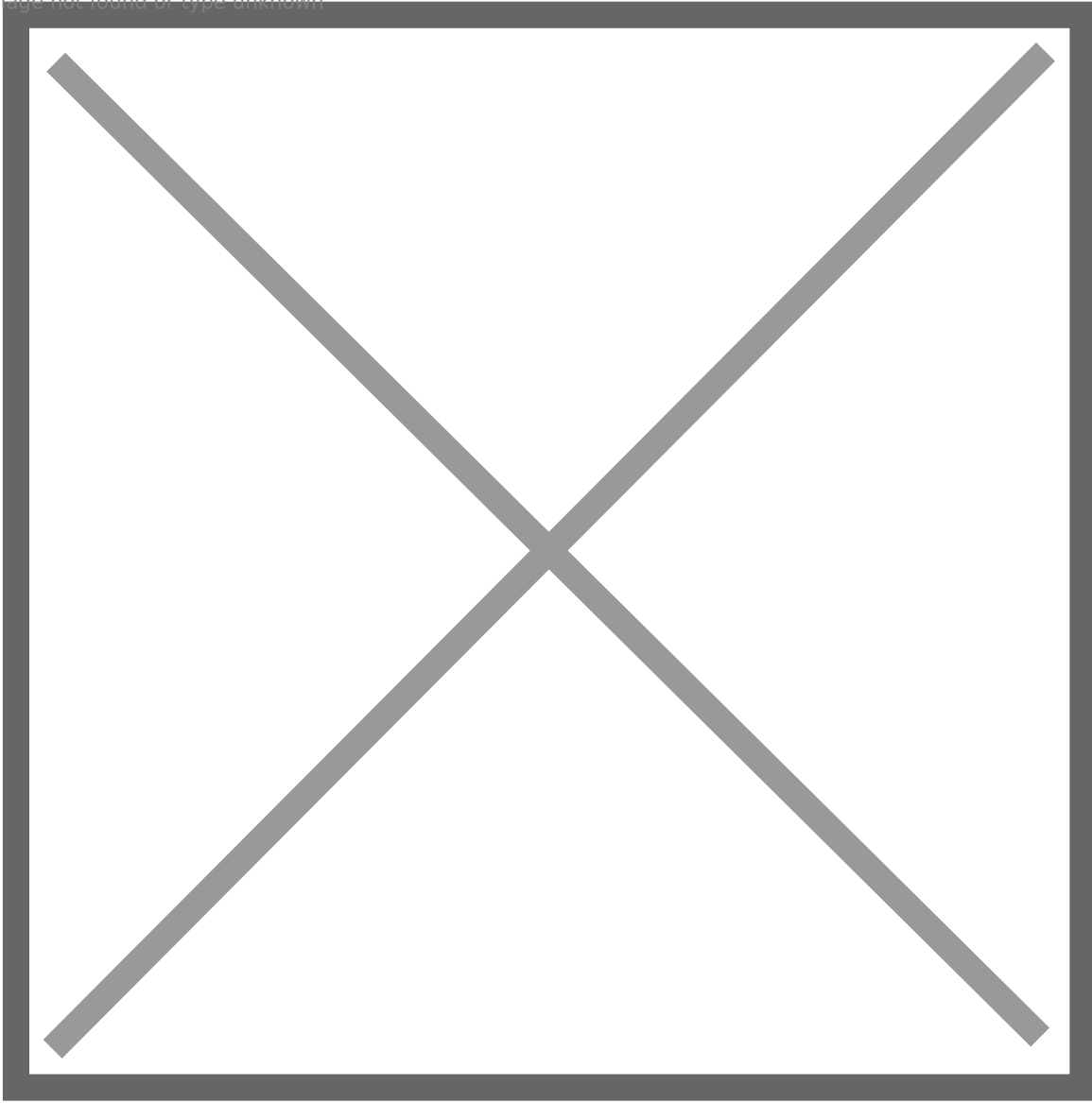




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