

## **Larissa: Unveiling of a monument for the 5th Division of Cretans in the presence of the Archbishop of Crete**



A Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated by two Hierarchs was celebrated on Sunday, 24 May, at the Metropolitan Church of Saint Achillios in Larissa, on the occasion of the anniversary of the Battle of Crete and the unveiling of the monument dedicated to the 5th Division of Cretans, the majority of whose members met their end and are buried in the city of Larissa, following unspeakable torture and dreadful hardships in the Larissa concentration camp during the Italian-German occupation.

His Eminence Archbishop Evgenios of Crete presided over the Matins and the Divine Liturgy, concelebrating with His Eminence Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, together with numerous Priests and Deacons. In his inspired homily, Archbishop Evgenios referred to the multitude of sacred commemorations observed on that Sunday. First and foremost, the Resurrection, since every Sunday

is Pascha; the Feast of the Ascension, as the Church remains within its festal period; the commemoration of the 318 God-bearing Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea; Saint Achillios, who participated in that Council; Saint Symeon of the wondrous Mountain; and others. Through these many spiritual occasions, he noted, emerges the sense of responsibility before God and the effort to accomplish His will upon earth, so that humanity may benefit and be saved, and that future generations may have examples to follow.

Archbishop Evgenios also explained the reason for his presence in Larissa: the unveiling of the monument honouring the approximately 800 Cretan soldiers of the 5th Division of Crete who, after the collapse of the front and without any possibility of returning to their homeland, were deceitfully arrested by the Italians in Athens and transferred to a concentration camp in Larissa, where through hardships and torture they were gradually exterminated to the last man. The words of the Archbishop stirred deep spiritual emotion and patriotic fervour among the large congregation, touching sensitive chords and deepening historical memory and awareness.

For his part, Metropolitan Ieronymos of Larissa and Tyrnavos, addressing Archbishop Evgenios and thanking him for his presence on such an important day for the people of Crete, recalled what he had stated three years earlier in Heraklion, as a guest of the Archbishop during the feast of Saint Minas: that “Cretans cannot come to Larissa merely as tourists or visitors, but only as pilgrims, since here lie buried the bones of their own children, who fought unto the end in the struggle for freedom.”

Among those attending were the Regional Governor of Thessaly, Mr. Dimitris Kouretas; the Mayor of Larissa, Mr. Athanasios Mamakos; the Inspector General of the Army, Mr. Stylianos Papastathopoulos; Members of Parliament for the prefecture; representatives of the Armed Forces, local government and other institutions; the entire Cretan Association of Larissa “Psiloritis”; a delegation from the Friends of the National Resistance Museum of Larissa; and representatives of the National Council for the Claiming of Germany’s Debts to Greece.

Immediately following the Divine Liturgy, a Doxology was celebrated, at the conclusion of which a special commemorative address was delivered by retired General Dimokritos Zervakis, Honorary Chief of the General Staff of the Cyprus National Guard and Honorary Commander of the First Army. Thereafter, all proceeded to the site of the monument dedicated to the Cretan fighters of the 5th Division of Crete, where Archbishop Evgenios served a Trisagion memorial service, the monument was officially unveiled, and greetings were offered by the attending

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dignitaries. The ceremony concluded with the laying of wreaths, the observance of a minute's silence, and the singing of the Greek national anthem.

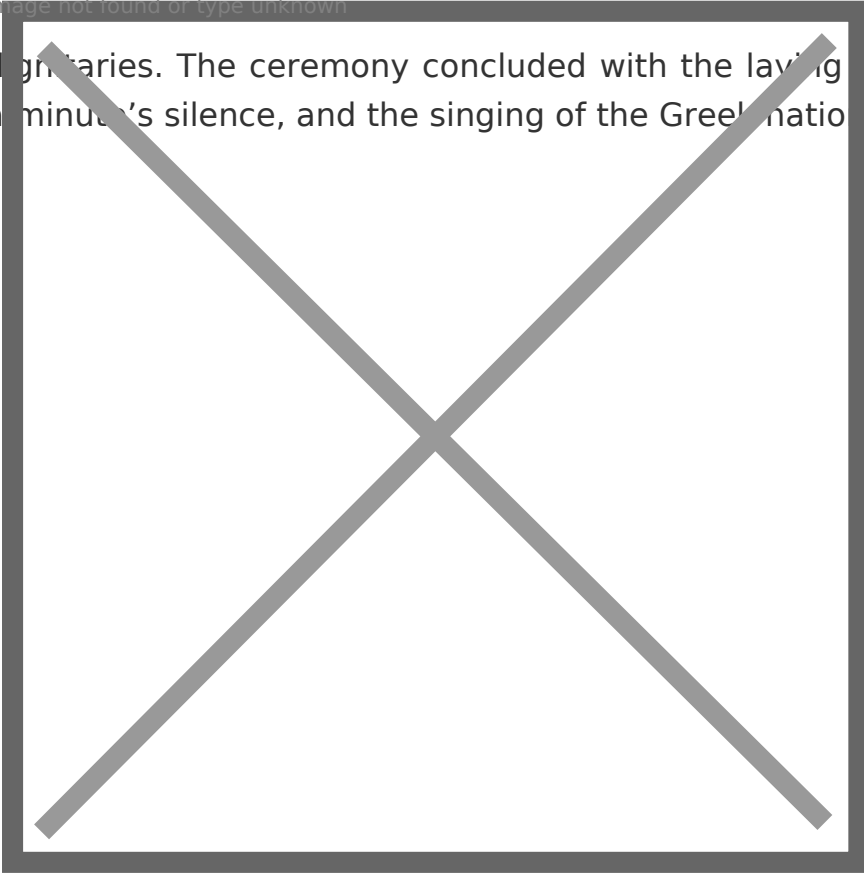


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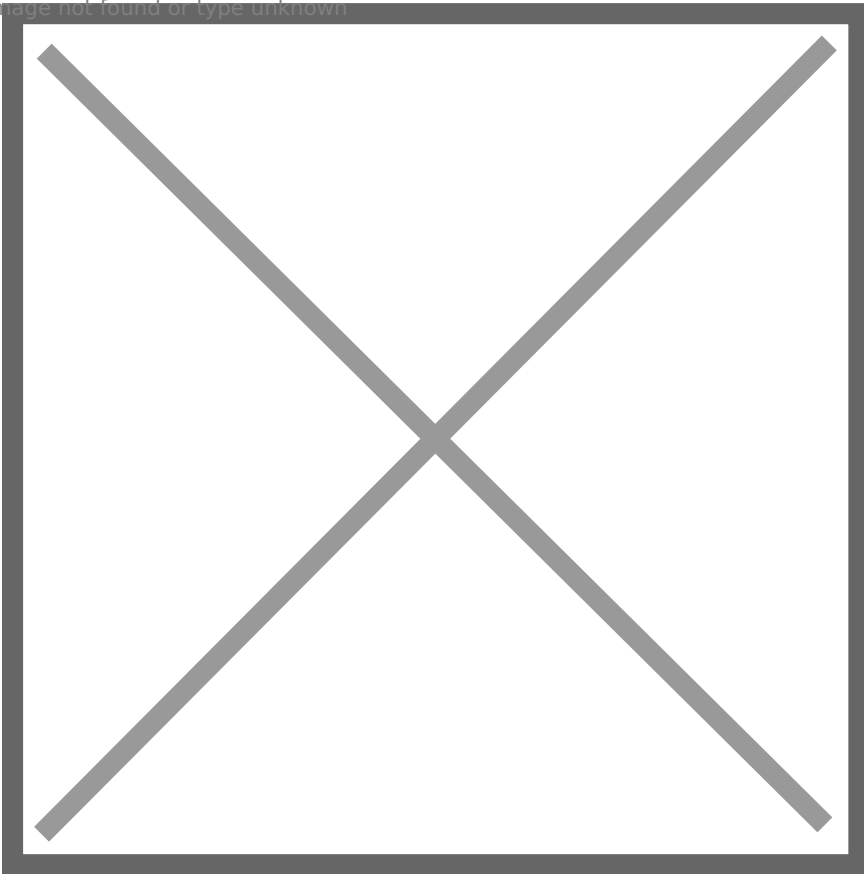






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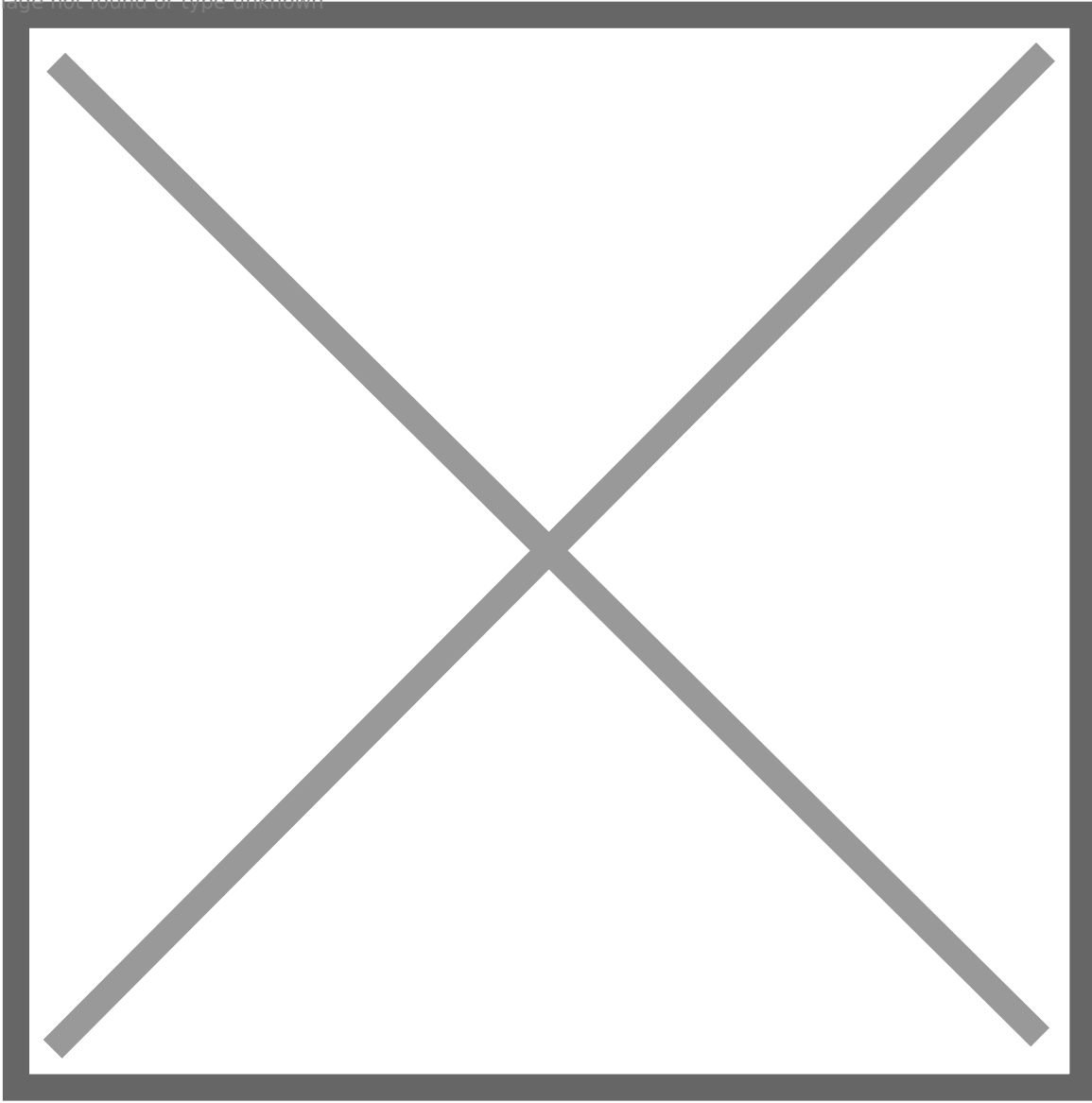








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