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Adelaide: Inaugural annual pilgrimage to Mt Gambier, SA



It has always been the custom for the Archdiocesan District of Adelaide for our metropolitan parishes to support their regional brothers and sisters by organising bus trips to the regional parishes for their feast days. Aside from the bus itself, these organised pilgrimages also often attract other pilgrims who attend using their own transport.

For the community of Mt Gambier, however, this presents a couple of challenges. Firstly, at nearly five hours' drive from Adelaide, it is impractical to travel to Mt Gambier for a regular morning liturgy as a day trip. Secondly, the lack of an established place for Sunday worship and, consequently, of an established feast day, does not provide the incentive for a pilgrimage.

The Archiepiscopal Vicar for the District of Adelaide, His Grace Bishop Silouan of Sinope, recognised these dual challenges, but for this reason deemed it more important to show support to the community of Mt Gambier with a pilgrimage. This is of course in addition to the existing Vespers, Matins and Divine Liturgy services that take place once a month for the faithful of Mt Gambier by our priests with the

blessing of His Grace.

The pilgrimage was organised by the Central Philoptochos, and the two-dozen participants from Adelaide met together at the Archdiocesan offices in Glenelg North after lunch on Friday 13th of May 2022. The convoy of 6 cars made their way up the South-Eastern Freeway, and after a short stopover at Keith arrived at Mt Gambier at around 7:30pm. After sharing a packed dinner supplied by the Central Philoptochos, the pilgrims prayed the Compline together and retired for the evening.

On the Saturday, after sharing breakfast together at the hotel, the group drove up the Mount itself to see the famous Blue Lake. From there, they travelled to nearby Penola to honour an invitation some weeks earlier from the Raidis Estate – a quaint vineyard, cellar door and restaurant in the famous Coonawarra wine region, owned by some of the Greek Orthodox faithful. After a relaxing afternoon, the pilgrims then returned to Mt Gambier to prepare for the evening Vespers.

Vespers on Saturday night was held at the Hellenic Hall, and His Grace briefly addressed the congregation on the feast of that Sunday – the Paralytic – and spoke about the importance of receiving healing from Christ, who heals our paralysis – not only of the body (though of that too sometimes), but especially of the soul. Vespers was followed by a meal again prepared and served by the ladies of the Central Philoptochos. After sharing a meal with the local community, the pilgrims returned to their hotel and after again praying the Compline together went to prepare for the next day.

The climax of the trip – the Sunday Liturgy – was very well attended by locals and pilgrims alike. Added to the 20 that were part of the convoy on Friday were another dozen who had made their own way there, plus a some of the locals to make around fifty in total.

Despite it being a beautiful weekend and a privilege to share Orthodox worship with the locals, there is nevertheless a persistent feeling in Mt Gambier of incompleteness, due to the lack of a proper, dedicated Church in which to worship. We look forward to seeing what the Providence of God may bring for this community in the months and years to come.

All of the pilgrims spoke very highly of the trip and are very much looking forward to doing it again next year.











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