

Annual Pilgrimage to Port Augusta and Coober Pedy in SA, for the Feast of the Beheading of Saint John the Forerunner and Baptist

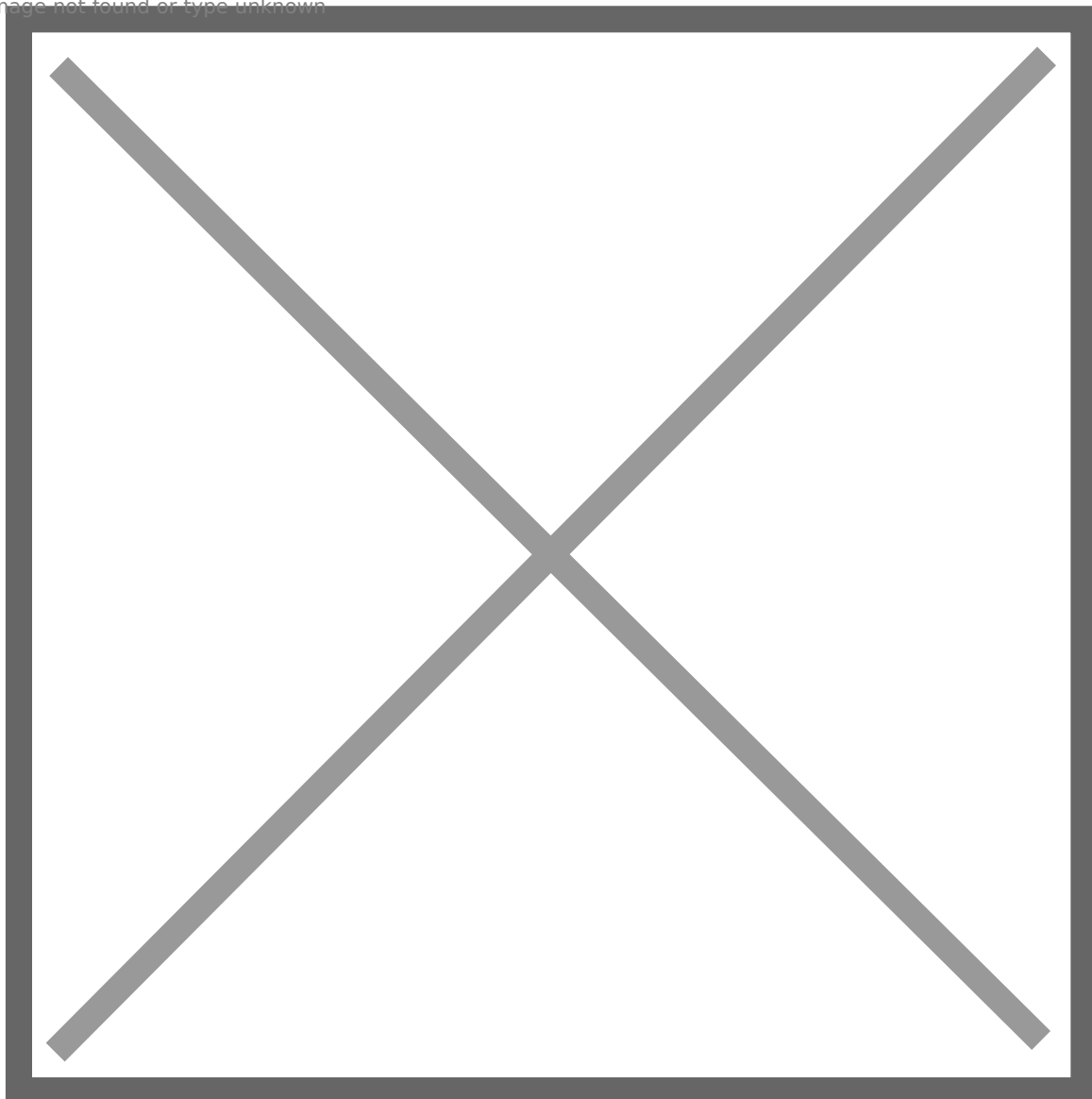


With the blessings of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios, the Archdiocesan District of Adelaide's small missionary team returned to the "Gateway to the Outback" (the regional city of Port Augusta) for the feast day of the Beheading of St John the Baptist in the Church dedicated to the Feast. It has become somewhat of a tradition to visit the city twice per year – at the feast days of the Beheading (29th of August) and the Nativity (24th of June). This year's trip began on Monday 28th of August 2023, travelling up early to prepare the Church for the service and to receive the pilgrims. It was also a blessed opportunity for those present to celebrate the Vespers for the Feast.

The Matins and Divine Liturgy was celebrated on the day starting at 8:30am. This slightly later start allowed time for the pilgrims to make the 3.5h trip from Adelaide – around a dozen by bus and private vehicle. These were joined by another half-dozen faithful from the neighbouring regional city of Whyalla (80km from Port Augusta) and the handful of Orthodox faithful who remain in Port Augusta, who all

braved the unseasonably warm 30°C and strong winds to come to the service. Altogether this made for two-dozen-strong attendance to honour the Venerable Forerunner.

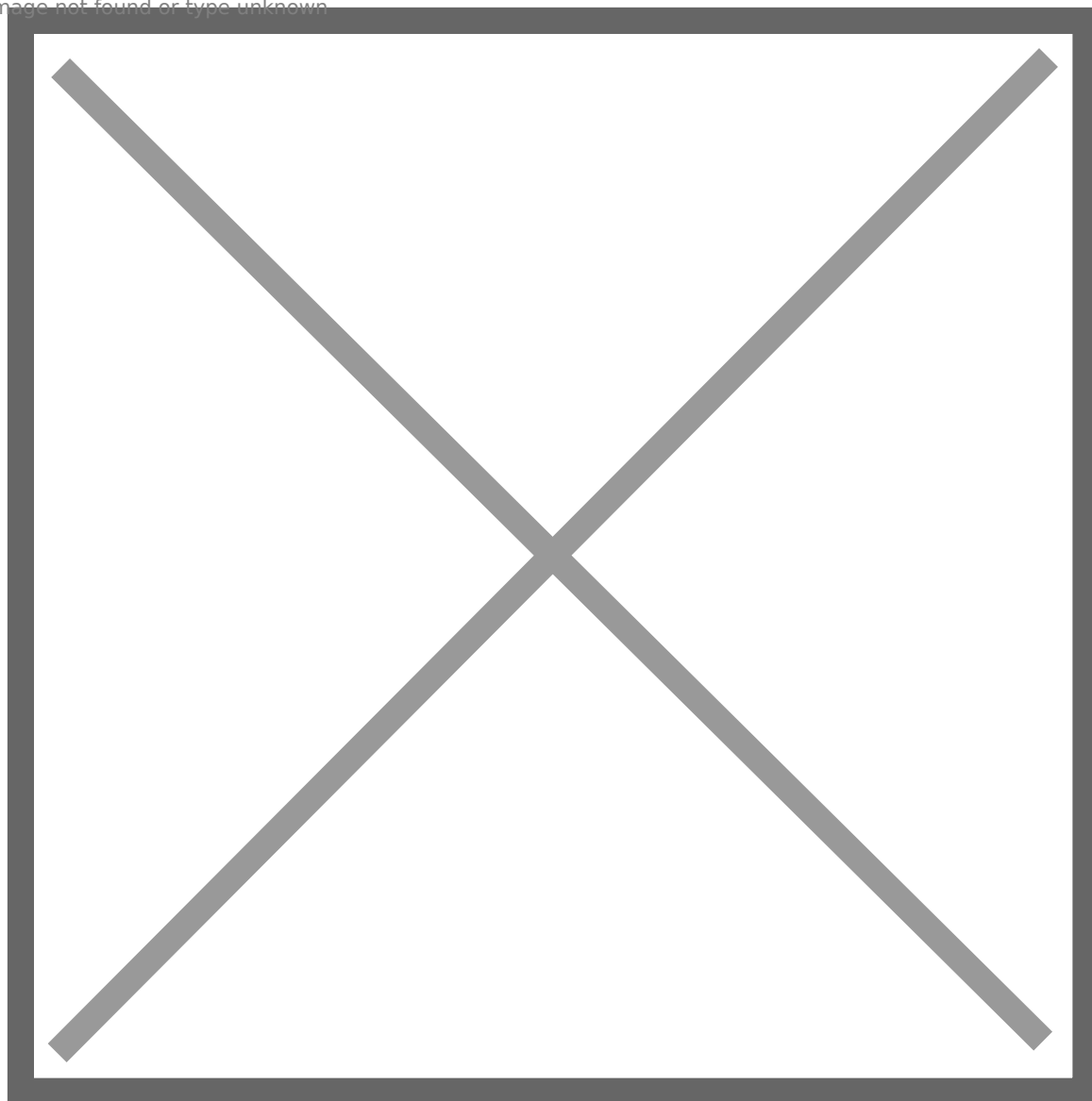
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The service was presided by the Archiepiscopal Vicar for the District of Adelaide, His Grace Bishop Silouan of Sinope, and assisted by Fr Jeremy Krieg (Greek Welfare Centre/St Sophia). His Grace conveyed to all the blessings and prayers of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, and on behalf of His Eminence addressed to the congregation. In his short address His Grace spoke about the innate calling that we all have, through God's Grace, to live an authentic Christian life, just like St John the Baptist, and that every moment in time and every place can be appropriated for us to become more Christ-like. The service was followed by a fasting luncheon lovingly prepared by the hard-working ladies of the Central Philoptochos.

As has also become custom, Bishop Silouan also took advantage of this opportunity to continue the trip further into the outback to Coober Pedy, which is “only” around 5.5 hours from Port Augusta (rather than an 9h trip direct from Adelaide). After packing up lunch at the Church of St John the Baptist, a small group made the journey to the “opal capital of the world” to serve the Divine Liturgy at the Parish of St Nicholas.

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The group arrived in Coober Pedy in the mid hours of Tuesday evening and met up with the resident monk, Fr John Eslick, who had spent the previous two days preparing the Church. In order to make an early getaway the next morning, they celebrated Matins, the Salutations to the Theotokos, and the Small Compline in the evening and retired to their accommodation for the night.

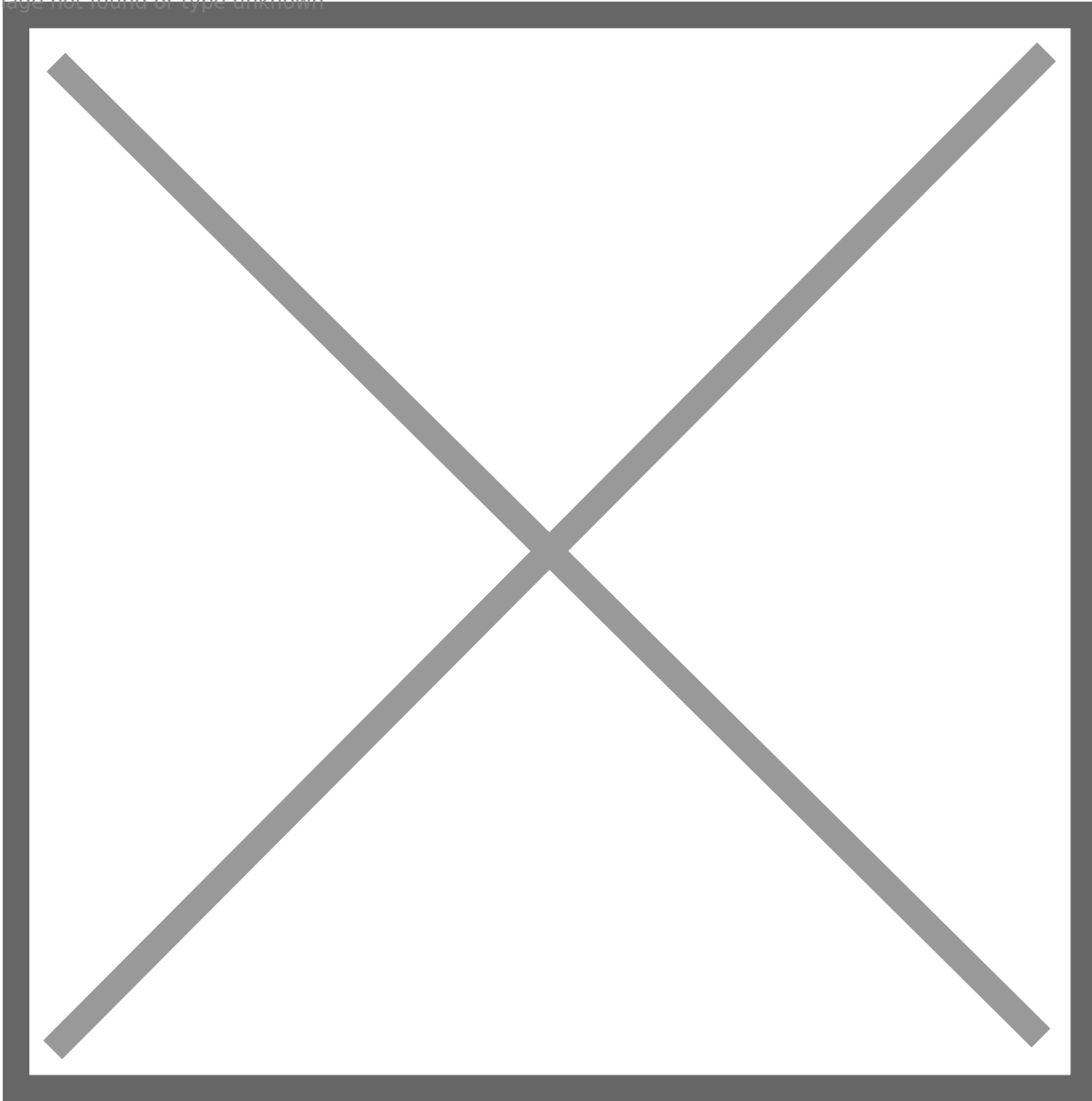
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The Liturgy the next morning began at 8:00am, celebrated by His Grace and assisted by Fr Jeremy. Thanks to the efforts of Fr John (who advertised the upcoming service with posters at various prominent locations in the town) nearly a dozen locals were able to take time out of the start of their workdays in order to attend – glory to God!

While addressing the gathering, His Grace Bishop Silouan noted that he would travel this same distance even if there was only one faithful there who needed it – so to have nearly a dozen attend was a big blessing and spiritually invigorated him to return, and next time to travel even further afield into the outback of our vast District. In closing, His Grace conveyed to the local faithful the love, the wishes, and the blessings of our Father and Archbishop, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia.

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To God be glory for all things. Holy Forerunner of Christ intercede for us.

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