

19/09/2023

Pilgrimage and Outreach to Mount Gambier, South Australia



Mount Gambier is the largest city in South Australia outside of Adelaide, with an estimated population of 28,000. It has a diverse economy, being a major service centre in the region for government and retail, and a hub for transport, mining, agriculture and tourism. The city still has dozens of Greek families resident, and unlike many of the State's regional centres it is a city that is still growing. However, at 5 hours' drive from Adelaide (and the same from Melbourne), its remoteness has meant that it has not been as well-tended by the Church as required, in spite of the heroic efforts of some of the clergy of Adelaide.

With the blessing of His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia, the Central Philoptochos organised what has become an annual a tour to Mount Gambier. The pilgrimage was spread over three days (Friday 8th to Sunday 10th of September) in order to make the most of the 10 hour round trip. This allowed time for the pilgrims to spend Saturday enjoying the many sightseeing opportunities that the city has to offer, like the famous Blue Lake, the Umpherston Sinkhole, the Discovery Centre (the “Lady Nelson”), and even visiting some of the neighbouring towns like Port Macdonnell. On Saturday evening, the Vespers was celebrated by His Grace Bishop Silouan of Sinope, assisted by Fr Jeremy Krieg (Greek Welfare Centre/St Sophia), at the local Hellenic Hall with a shared meal afterward catered by the Central Philoptochos.

On Sunday morning His Grace, assisted by Fr Jeremy Krieg, celebrated the liturgy at the Hellenic Hall, with an impressive gathering of 30 people comprised of both pilgrims and locals. His Grace addressed the people with a message of the Cross – the intimate gathering allowing him to involve the children in his sermon, using his episcopal staff as a prop to tell the story of Moses and the Israelites in the desert and the healing miracle of the bronze snake. The service was followed by morning tea, again catered by the Central Philoptochos and assisted by the locals.



After morning tea, the pilgrims commenced their return trip to Adelaide, but not before stopping over at Raidis Estate at the nearby town of Penola (50km North of Mt Gambier) for lamb on a spit, joined by a number of the Mt Gambier locals. The Raidis family were particularly keen to host the lunch as part of a fundraising event for the District of Adelaide’s Archdiocesan Church project. His Grace was able to use the opportunity to present the vision and the latest designs for the project to those who were present. Through the generosity of the few dozen that were

present, several hundred dollars were raised to assist with this project. After spending some time at the Estate, the pilgrims resumed their journey back to Adelaide, arriving mid evening.

The pilgrimage was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and the locals in particular were uplifted and encouraged by the opportunity to share fellowship with fellow Orthodox Christians. As a bonus, the pilgrimage also raised a modest sum that will all contribute to the missionary activities of the District of Adelaide. Truly, this has

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