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Metropolitan Cleopas of Sweden: “Growing Older Together”



The year 2023 ended on a very nice note, with the forty-day churching of little Athanasios, the son of Konstantinos and Maria, distinguished members of our Cathedral in Stockholm.

Little Athanasios was adorable as he participated in the service full of laughter and tranquility!

As I held him in my arms, a song by the acclaimed singer Haroula Alexiou came to mind, written by Makis Seviloglou and entitled “We’re Getting Older Together.”

“Two pearly eyes

That look a little like yours and a little like mine...

I sing you a lullaby

And you close your eyes like an angel

Even though I’m getting older

We’re getting older together

Even though I’m getting older

I’ll melt every time I hear you laugh and cry”

Here in the Greek Community of Scandinavia and our local Church, we, too, grow older together, because – to put it simply – “we are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

We share in the joys and sorrows of our brothers and sisters, along with their dreams and successes, because they are our family!

The words of St. Paul the Apostle are wise and timeless: "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body." (1st Corinth. 12,12-13)

It is within the Church that we learn how to walk together, to build dreams together, to work together, to create things together, and to have an ecclesiological conscience!

The journey to Emmaus, together with Luke and Cleopas, is a common journey of spiritual progress and recognition, interembracing, searching, processing and interpreting spiritual "data" and empirical knowledge that turns away from jealousy, envy, disparagement, unfair competition, and slander!

We learn to walk together in unity, each one of us looking out for the other and for the best interests of the group, we share in one another's joys and sorrows, in love and a spirit of obedience, joined indivisibly to the Head of the Church - Jesus Christ.

I was very happy to have read the statistics from the Holy Sacraments celebrated in the year 2023, according to which our parishes in Scandinavia welcomed 31 adults as new members of the Church through the service of chrismation and another 22 adults through baptism.

I extend my warmest congratulations to the Reverend Clergy for their missionary zeal and devotion to their ministry!

St. John Chrysostom reminds us that all of us - shepherds and logical sheep - are all being shepherded by Christ: "I have told you many times that shepherds and sheep are divided in this manner according to human discernment, but before Christ all are sheep. Both the shepherds and sheep are all shepherded by the one arch-shepherd" (St. John Chrysostom, On the Ascension, sermon 2, 12. P.G. 52, 784).

Being that I am currently working on a new study on the missionary work of the ever-memorable Elder Eusevios Vittis in Scandinavia, let us read what he has to say through his correspondence regarding the longed for mystical union of the Church, and let us accept his words as a heartfelt wish, supplication, and fervent prayer for Hellenism all over the world:

"In my humble opinion, the church must become a spiritual center that gives off powerful rays from the light of Christ, the love described in the Gospel, heavenly truth, life in the Holy Spirit, a place of perpetual worship of the Trinitarian God in

spirit and truth, in the Orthodox faith, and in the sanctification of soul and spirit. Only in this way can fulfill its mission.

The church is not there for others, but rather, for us. There is no us and them.

The pronoun “us” includes us all. That means that every one of us, from the first to the last, will find tranquility of spirit like a calm sea, we will meet our brethren mystically heart to heart and overcome the pettiness and futility of this world.

I wish this for you in spite of the unworthiness that characterizes me, and through you, to all the brethren who will participate in this special gift of our Lord. I entreat our Risen Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart to give His gifts “in exceeding abundance, whether in prayer or thought” to each of you and your loved ones, and to all our brethren in faith in Christ Jesus.

I greet you with deep thanks, joy, sentiments, and corresponding love in His Name. Archimandrite Eusevios Vittis, monk” (Archive of the St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Uppsala)

Happy New Year, my brothers and sisters! “Even though I grow older, we shall grow older together”

Metropolisofsweden