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■ Festal Homily on the Occasion of the Commemoration of Sts. Cyprian and Justina (October 2, 2014)

Our Dignity in Christ and the Predominance of Vulgarity The Antidote of Purifying Repentance

†Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Phyle

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Let us all invoke the Grace of Christ, the Love of the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit; and let us make the sign of the Cross carefully and prayerfully, in order to participate in the Ministry of the Word of God, to “officiate” together the Gospel of Grace, and to be illumined and sanctified.

May the Protection of the *Theotokos*, the strengthening of the Precious Cross and of our Saints whom we are commemorating today, and the guidance and prayers of our Elder and Father, Metropolitan Cyprian of blessed memory (†May 17, 2013), be with us during our humble homily.



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The sacred Commemoration of the Holy glorious Martyrs Cyprian and Justina—the Patron Saints of our monastery, which is the center of our Holy Metropolis—has, this evening, assembled together the People of God, the Orthodox *Pleroma*, that we might offer up hymns of praise, glory, and thanksgiving, but also for another very important reason: that we might hear the teaching of the Saints.

The Saints instruct us at all times and unceasingly, but especial-



ly when it is their Feast Day. The Saints are our great teachers. Our own Saints, though they lived some seventeen centuries ago, remain our living teachers; they are ever our contemporary and timely guides on the path of our ecclesification, our Christification, our deification, and

our union in the bosom of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Today, as never before, the teaching of the Saints, the prophetic word of the Saints, must be constantly heard. We, the faithful members of the Holy Orthodox Church, are in need of the teaching of the Saints. We are personally in need, but so too is our society in general, which is walking in the *darkness and shadow of death*.

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Let us ask ourselves: What would the Holy Martyrs whom we are honoring have to teach us today?

What is it that troubles us acutely at a personal, collective, national, and worldwide level, such that we await from our Saints their guiding instruction, their encouraging words, and their heartening intervention?

We all, clergy and laity alike, must confess, with self-criticism and frankness, that by our witting or unwitting participation therein, we share responsibility for the fact that the social environment in which we live and move is pervaded to an extraordinary degree by vulgarity.

Vulgarity, in the name of freedom, is ubiquitous. The *glorification of the trivial* and *permissiveness* passing as freedom hold sway and have led us to *spiritual captivity*.

We live in a *sea of vulgarity*. Vulgarity is threatening to become a *way of life*. This explosion of vulgarity destroys the *sanctity of life*; it negates all that is holy, all that is beautiful, and all that is true.

A powerful wave of *delirium* is sweeping away everything of quality and substance, moral sensitivity, and aesthetic harmony.

We are experiencing an *aesthetic and spiritual tragedy*, wherein it appears that everything is yielding to the *allure of vulgarity and immorality*.

Were the author of Ecclesiastes alive in our days, it is certain that, upon discerning this tragedy, he would cry out: “Vulgarity of vulgarities! All is vulgarity!”

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Our Saints, the glorious Martyrs Cyprian and Justina, nonetheless do not turn their backs on us—they do not allow us to despond. They do not abandon us alone in a world so devoid of beauty. They do not remain indifferent when we—who, by God’s mercy, *bear the Name of Christ*—are struck by the foaming waves of a mindless and vulgar environment.



And by *vulgar* we mean a lack of nobility and discretion, a lack of decorum and modesty.... By *vulgar* we mean what is crude, offensive, coarse, indecent, and vile....

Our Saints, the Saints of the Church in general, and especially the All-Pure and All-Blameless *Theotokos*, are *our initiators into what is holy, pure, and virginal—to what is truly beautiful and noble*.

Our Holy Church, by her God-befitting ethos, her regenerating Mysteries, and her Saints, constantly bears witness throughout history to the dignity of humankind.

The deification of human nature in the Person of Christ, our Resurrected Savior, and the session of our Christified nature on the Throne of the Holy Trinity bear witness to our grandeur and dignity.

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Sts. Cyprian and Justina pose to all of us this evening some unsparing questions:

Why are we not **witnesses to human dignity**, but rather allow the vulgarity of the world to influence us in one way or another?

Why do we neglect to cultivate **purifying repentance**, but rather allow vulgarization to encroach upon our being and our nature?

Why are we not assiduous to culti-



vate purity—in the profound sense of the word—together with the **perpetual repentance of the Publican**, as an antidote to the *spirit of the world* and *vulgarity* in all its sundry forms?

Why do we capitulate and allow the **three-headed beast** of ambition, avarice, and hedonism to deprave our godlike natural nobility?

Why do we neglect to **guard our senses** and allow vulgarity slowly but surely to corrupt us?

Why do we not guard the **purity of our hearts** and forget that only “the pure in heart” will be counted worthy to see God?

Why do men contribute to the debasement and degradation of women, who in their eyes have become little more than *bared flesh*?

Why do women unprotestingly accept to being turned into a product, usually vulgar, of advertisement?

Why do we allow—when, indeed, we do not contribute to it—the impression to abide that *the fight on behalf of what is holy, sacred, pure, and truly beautiful has been lost*?

Why is our *spirit not exasperated* when we see the *desacralization of the world* around us..., when we see the *prevalence of what is vulgar and vile*, whether in terms of morals or the promotion of fleshliness and carnality?

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Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Our responsibility before God and history is enormous, since we, —the “earthen vessels”—have been called upon to preserve, by the Grace of God, *human dignity*.

Orthodox ecclesiastical anthropology, Theanthropic humanism, is the sole antidote to the vulgarization of our person, our ethos, and our civilization.

The life of creative and hope-bearing repentance and the life of Christocentric purity cast out the *culture of vulgarity*.

The model of repentance, St. Cyprian, and the **model of purity and virginity**, St. Justina, teach and exhort us prophetically on this day:

Fight against the kingdom of vulgarity! **Do not** remain indifferent to the de-



struction of the sanctity of life! **Make a stand** against vulgarity in all of its forms! **Become witnesses** to that which is genuinely true and beautiful! **Do not** allow the waves of vulgarity to inundate your existence, your house, your environment, and your relationships! **Preserve** in your person the Theanthropic civilization of our nation! **Cultivate** creative repentance and reject unhealthy and inert introversion! **Become** pure in all of the aspects of your life! **Reverse** the image of woman as an object and instrument of base purposes; show forth and preserve her dignity. Save the hope of the world! **Give** life and vision to the world. **By** your **nobility and dignity in Christ** lead the world to the embrace of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to the bosom of the Holy Trinity, to Whom are due glory, honor, and worship, now and ever and unto the ages of ages. Amen!

I thank you for your attention.



TO GOD
BE GLORY AND
THANKSGIVING!