

**Press Release: August 16, 2015**

On 16 August 2015 for the first time in 41 years the Church of Panagia (Virgin Mary) Galakdrofousas in Palekythro build in 1896, was opened for worship to celebrate the feast of Dormition of the Theodokos, commemorating the repose and assumption into heaven of the Mother of Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary. The last worship was on 15 August 1974 celebrated by the 76 years old priest of the village, Father George Athanasiou who was arrested immediately after.

Bishop Porfyrios of Neapolis celebrated a very emotional liturgy with approximately 400 faithful originally from the village of Palekythro, some of whom had not been back or seen each other until today. Imam Fuat Tosun, regional mufti of Kyrenia, represented Dr Talip Atalay, Mufti of Cyprus. Salpy Eskidjian Weiderud, represented the Office of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process under the Auspices of the Embassy of Sweden.

In his address Bishop Porfyrios reiterated the appreciation of Archbishop Chrysostomos II to the Mufti for his personal attention and intervention for today's worship, which had been rejected by the Turkish Cypriot authorities in earlier years. "The religious leaders of Cyprus are committed to continue to dialogue and work together for religious freedom, human rights and peace with the support of the Embassy of Sweden. We are grateful to the Office of the Religious Track for their role in today's worship and their constant facilitation for the religious leader's dialogue for peace." The Bishop reminded the faithful that they should not lose hope and faith. "With the help of God peace is possible and we should all work towards that end."

Imam Fuat Tosun brought greetings of peace from the Mufti of Cyprus and welcomed and congratulated the faithful in Greek. "God will help both Christians and Muslims to work together to achieve peace in Cyprus and we should continue our joint efforts in this regard." he said.