

# **CON-CELEBRATION IN ALEXANDRIA BY HIS BEATITUDE THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA AND HIS BEATITUDE THE METROPOLITAN OF KIEV**

On the 1st Sunday of Great and Holy Lent (Sunday of Orthodoxy), 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023, a con-celebration was served in the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria of His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa and His Beatitude Epiphanius Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine, who is on a Cordial Visit to the Second Throne Church.

Concelebrating with the venerable Primates were Their Eminences Elder Gabriel of Leontopolis the Patriarchal Vicar General, Symeon of Vinnitsa Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Church, Eustratios of Bila Tserkva, Deputy Secretary, George of Guinea His Beatitude's Representative in Athens, Nikodimos of Memphis Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, Panteleimon of Naucratis Chief Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Alexandrian Patriarchate, Narcissus of Pelusium Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria and Germanos of Tamiathus, Head of the Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified of Alexandria.

During the Eucharistic Gathering, His Beatitude Theodoros II ordained to the Priesthood the Archdeacon of the Holy Archdiocese of Alexandria, Theodoros Mutombo Kasonga, a graduate of the "Athanasios the Great" Patriarchal Academy of Alexandria originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whom he then consecrated as an Archimandrite.

Prior to the end of the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude the Pope and Patriarch addressed His Beatitude Metropolitan Epiphanius, to whom he gave a Hierarchal Pectoral Cross and a most precious staff for walking.

In his reply among others, the Metropolitan of Kiev said: "Today, we honor the holy icons with special solemnity and confirm our adherence to the true faith, as formulated in the Divine Revelation and as explained in the doctrines of the Holy Fathers of the seven Ecumenical Councils. This is the apostolic faith, this is the orthodox faith, this is the saving faith! Today, we do not only honor icons as sacred depictions of our Lord Jesus Christ, His Holy Mother and the Saints. We have also become a living image, a living representation, because we believe that, according to the word of the Gospel, Christ himself is now among us and the Holy Spirit dwells in us by grace.

Today, in this Divine Liturgy, in the Divine Eucharist, in common prayer and unity through the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, we have become a living embodiment of the unity of the Church. The unity against which the forces of evil, heresies and divisions rise from time to time – but which they cannot destroy, because God himself has established it. We thank from the bottom of our hearts Your Beatitude and the brother Hierarchs of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa for your firm adherence to the Orthodox faith and canonical order, for your sacrificial love and care for the Church of Ukraine – for your younger brothers and sisters in the Lord. You supported us and continue to support us even though it caused you problems.

However, today's celebration shows that no matter how strong the lie may seem, it will be defeated. Evil will surely be defeated and good and truth will be established. On the side of the heresy of the iconoclasts who rose up against the Church were the powers, the power of kings and the power of arms – but nothing helped the lie. So now a new teaching,

contrary to the Gospel, filled with the pride of this world and the heresy of tribalism, has seized a part of the Church of Christ in the northern countries, and the rulers of these countries are spreading it by the power of the sword. However, this too will be condemned, just as the ancient heresies were condemned and rejected.

Today, Your Beatitude, you are a living image of your holy predecessors on the Patriarchal Throne, the great Hierarchs Clement, Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria and many others. Today, just like those in their time, you are a minister of the truth, a preacher of the truth, a teacher of the canonical order, an heir to the faith of the apostles, continuing the work of the divine fathers and teachers of the Church of Christ. You stand as a good helmsman at the helm of the ship of salvation and guide the flock entrusted to you on the way to salvation. May the prayers and help of your holy predecessors always be with you and with the most holy Church of the Great Alexandria and all of Africa...

...No words will be sufficient to express all our feelings, all our gratitude and brotherly love for you and for the Church you lead. We pray to Almighty God to reward you a hundredfold for all that you have done and continue to do for Ukraine and for the whole of Orthodoxy. We believe that we will have the opportunity in the near future to thank you for the hospitality with which you received us in your home, this holy Patriarchate, and to welcome your Beatitude to our home, Kiev.

We wish you, Your Beatitude, many and blessed years, good health and fruitful ministry in the vineyard of Christ. May the Church of Christ on the African continent, your devout flock, multiply and increase. May Orthodoxy triumph and be established. Many years, Your Beatitude!"

The Metropolitan of Kiev gave His Beatitude Hierarchal amulets with a pectoral cross as well as a traditional piece of Ukrainian handcraft.

This was followed by the established annual commemoration of the deceased Presidents, members and benefactors of the Greek Community of Alexandria, a prayer for the repose of the souls of the victims of the recent tragic train accident in Greece, as well as the procession of the holy icons inside the large and beautiful Cathedral.

Afterwards, in the Throne Room, inside the adjacent Patriarchal Palace, the decoration of the Primate of the Ukrainian Church with the highest distinction of the Presbyterian Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Grand Cross of the Holy Apostle Mark with a Star, took place, as well as of his accompanying archpriests, the Metropolitans of Vinnitsa and Bila Tserkva, with the Gold Cross of Saint Mark, to whom the to whom His Beatitude also gave hierarchical amulets, as well as commemorative gifts to the other accompanying clergy. Addressing the Ambassadors of Greece and Ukraine present, His Beatitude Mr. Theodore II expressed his gratitude to "his two homelands, Greece and Egypt, which always support in every possible way the missionary, social and humanitarian work of the Alexandrian Church" , as he characteristically mentioned, prayed for the prevailing peace and prosperity of the Ukrainian people, underlining the importance of peaceful dialogue between peoples, as the only way to resolve differences, overcome differences and to progress in the world.

Finally, His Beatitude hosted an official lunch in honor of his guest His Beatitude Epiphanius Metropolitan of Kiev and All Ukraine at the premises of the Hellenic Naval Club of Alexandria.

Participating in the above Liturgical and festive functions were His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to Cairo Mr. Nicholas Papageorgiou, His Excellency the Ambassador of Ukraine to Cairo, the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr. Ahanasios Kotsionis, the newly-elected Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr. Dimitrios

Vafiades, the Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Cairo Mr. Christos Kavalis, the Chairman of the Arabic-speaking Community of Alexandria, President of Historic Hellenic Organizations, Societies and Associations in the Land of the Nile, the Clergy of the nHoly Archdiocese of Alexandria and Many Christians from Egypt, Greece and Ukraine.

*Photographs by Gregory Chaliakapoulou, Alexandria*