

DOXOLOGY ON THE ARRIVAL OF HIS BEATITUDE AT THE HOLY METROPOLIS OF NIGERIA – VISIT TO THE CONSUL OF EGYPT IN LAGOS

On the morning of 15th February 2012, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, accompanied by His Eminence Gregory Metropolitan of Cameroon and the Very Reverend Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos, Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, went to the temporary Holy Cathedral of the Resurrection of the Lord in Lagos, where he was officially received by His Eminence Alexandros Metropolitan of Nigeria, clergy of the local Church and many faithful.

A Doxology was immediately sung, before the end of which His Eminence Alexandros of Nigeria addressed His Beatitude, saying:

“Your Beatitude, Father and Master, with deep emotion and ineffable joy we welcome you today to the blessed, but also tortured land of Nigeria.

Today clergy and people have gathered around you. Around the first Bishop of the ancient and historic Church of Africa, to which the Father is favourable and the Holy Spirit reveals in Christ. We welcome today the successor of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark, in whom the entire tradition of the divine and holy Apostles is present.

In this your first pastoral visit to the Church of Nigeria, Your Beatitude, you are not alone. Visibly

accompanying you is my dear brother His Eminence Gregory of Cameroon and our beloved Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod or the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Reverend Panteleimon, whom we welcome with particular joy.

With you, though, there is another entourage, a mystical chorus which comes down through the depths of the centuries. Athanasios the Great, Kyrillos, John the Merciful, Isidoros of Pilousion, Dionysios, Kyrillos Loukaris, Nektarios. God's wisdom and power!

Antony the Great, Pachomios, Mary of Egypt, Makarios, Moses of Ethiopia. All are sanctified figures of the desert. Nitria. Skitis. Tears of repentance, crucified bodies "with the passions"! Catherine the omniscient, the Great Martyr Minas, Proterios and Petros of Alexandria and the entire cloud of those who were perfect in the faith of the Church of Alexandria and its provinces. The blood of martyrdom which still today irrigates the tree of our faith.

Your Beatitude this is your real pastoral entourage on this journey. The manifest and undisclosed ecclesiastical experience of twenty uninterrupted centuries. An experience which was watered by the blood of thousands of martyrs, was tested in the furnace of afflictions, forged by the demonic attacks of the ruler of the world of this century. And yet! We are alive and active. We all officiate with you at the helm, the Church of Alexandria, the now and ever of the ages and of history. That is why today you stand aright on the Throne, not influenced, uncompromising. And as we face you, a visible sign of our historic continuation and consequence, we all, the Church of Alexandria, can without fear shout in the Lord to all, both near and far, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world".

We ask that you please pray so that all of us who make up the Church of Nigeria will always bear witness to the genuine church experience, as through temptations we strive to become

Christ-like. Welcome Your Beatitude to our land. Welcome to the Orthodox Church of Nigeria”.

During his reply, His Beatitude expressed his feelings regarding this trip to the first ecclesiastical province of the Alexandrian Church which he elevated to the value and honour of a Metropolis following his election to the Patriarchal Throne of St mark, spoke of his many years of acquaintance with His Eminence Alexandros and praised the productive pastoral and missionary efforts being undertaken in the most suffering country of Africa, emphasizing its ecclesiological and theological foundations.

He then went to the adjacent Holy Hermitage-Theological Seminary of St Antony, which is a standard of monastic life in Western Africa as the African Hieromonks and monks live together with their Shepherd His Eminence Alexandros, with daily worship. He venerated the relics of St Luke, Archbishop of Symferopolis, and blessed the lay workers of the activities of the Church.

Following his visit to the offices of the Holy Metropolis of Nigeria His Beatitude visited the Honourable Consul of Egypt in Lagos, Mr Ahmed Baha’El Din.

During his visit His Beatitude expressed his love for the land of the Nile, which always shows respect for and honours the two-thousand year presence of the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria as the oldest living African Christian organization, as well as his deep conviction for the progress and prosperity of the country. On his behalf the Honourable Consul said that the visit by the Patriarch was an honour and a particular blessing.

Present at the meeting were Their Eminences the Metropolitans of Nigeria and Cameroon, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece Mr

Dionysios Sourvanos and the Honourable Archon of the Throne Mr
Anestis Arnopoulos.