

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST ORTHODOX MONASTERY IN SOUTH AFRICA

On 19th January 2018, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, arrived in South Africa, to participate in the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Holy Metropolis of Good Hope (1968-2018) and then to go on a great missionary journey to Namibia and Kenya.

On the afternoon of his arrival, His Beatitude the Patriarch, accompanied by the local Metropolitan His Eminence Damaskinos of Johannesburg and Pretoria, His Grace Nikodimos Bishop of Nitria and the Reverend Protopresbyter Fr. Athenodoros Papaevripiades, Exarch of the Patriarchate of Alexandria in Cyprus, visited the newly-established Holy Monastery of Saints Nicholas of Myra, Nektarios of Aegina and Paisios of Mount Athos, in the Hartebeespoort area.

Present during the visit were His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece to South Africa Mr. Eleftherios Kouvaritakis, the Honourable Consul General of Greece Mr. Ioannis Hatzantonakis, both of whom are from Crete, the Honourable Mr. George Baladakis Chairman of the Office Bearers of the Throne in South Africa, Mrs. Ariadne Psillos, Lady of the Churches from Zimbabwe, Clergy from the Holy Metropolis and many faithful.

The Holy Monastery was founded through the concern and efforts of His Eminence Seraphim Metropolitan of Johannesburg and Pretoria (now of Zimbabwe and Angola), in a quiet area, one hour from Johannesburg on a verdant hill with a beautiful view.

With the assistance of His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros II, and during the Hierarchal tenure of His Eminence Damaskinos of Johannesburg and Pretoria, under the spiritual guidance of the Very Reverend Archimandrite Apostolos Apostolakis, who has also founded two other convents in Kenya and Tanzania, an Sisterhood was established comprising five sisters. The Reverend Protopresbyter decisively assisted the entire effort.

The Alexandrian Primate, at the end of Vespers, conducted the enthronement of the first Abbess of the Holy Monastery, Sister Orthodoxia, who is also from Crete.

In his homily, His Beatitude thanked all who had contributed to the establishment of the Monastic complex, His Eminence Seraphim Metropolitan of Zimbabwe and Angola, His Eminence Damaskinos Metropolitan of Johannesburg, Fr. Athenodoros Papaevripiades, the Clergy, the Greeks and South Africans, for their love, protection and care which they give to the Monastery. He emphasized that *"Monasticism is not a denial of the world, but a challenge for reformation, transformation in Christ and its salvation"*. He concluded that the presence and ministry of the Holy Monastery of St Nektarios will in the future become a point of attraction for many young and spiritual people, from South African and Missions in general, who will come to know the ideals of Orthodox Monasticism, contributing to their promotion in the field of African Orthodoxy and becoming a vital and hopeful presence for contemporary mankind.