

FOUNDATION OF THE FIRST ORTHODOX CHURCH IN BOTSWANA

On 1st June 2012, His Holiness Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa performed the Sanctification and foundation of the first Orthodox Church in Phakalane, Gaborone, in Botswana.

Accompanied by His Eminence George of Accra, Archbishop Makarios of Kenya, His Eminence Gannadios Bishop of Botswana, the Honorary Consul of Botswana in Athens Mr Nektarios Polychroniou, the Euro-parliamentarian Dr Eleni Theocharous, representatives of local Government, clergy and lay people, as well as representatives of the Orthodox Communities of Botswana, His Holiness performed the service, after which he announced that the church will be dedicated to the name of St John Chrysostomos, St Christopher and the Archangel Michael.

He spoke with great feeling of the enormous donation made by the family of the late Father Evelthon from Paralimni in Cyprus, especially Presvytera Androula Papaevelthon, who in memory of the late priest gave the enormous donation for the purchase of the property. This donation was originally destined for Kenya, but with the intervention of His Holiness to His Eminence the Metropolitan of Kenya, the donation was transferred to Botswana. His Holiness emphasized that the family will dedicate the church to the name of St Christopher, in memory of their late son Christopher (who was a doctor). It will also be dedicated to the name of the Archangel Michael, in memory of the son of Savvas and Rena Savvas from Cyprus, who continually support the work of the Diocese of Botswana.

His Holiness prayed that he will very soon inaugurate the church in Botswana, which it is to be noted is the first

Orthodox church in the country. His Holiness and his entourage then went to the Diocese, where he performed the Sanctification of the inauguration of the Diocese and Bishopric. In his address he spoke of his pastoral tenure as Metropolitan of Zimbabwe and Botswana and with great satisfaction hailed the first steps of organising the Holy Diocese, such as the Secretariat, and other activities of the local church. He prayed that "this place which is being sanctified today, will be the base and starting point for the development of the spiritual effort in this progress-loving country".

Following the ceremony His Eminence hosted a reception for the Primate and all present, and also visited the little school of the Diocese which is situated in an adjacent building.

Immediately thereafter, His Holiness attended an official lunch which was hosted in his honour by the Minister of Health of Botswana. Present among others were the Director of the President's Office and the Deputy Minister of the country, the Euro-parliamentarian Dr Eleni Theocharous, the Consul of Botswana in Athens, the Ambassador of Greece in South Africa, the Director of Protocol and the Consul of the Czech Republic in Botswana. The Minister of Health gave gifts to His Holiness on behalf of the President of the Republic and they had an interesting discussion with His Holiness on the implementation of humanistic and medical programmes in Botswana through the Holy Diocese. He promised the total support of the Government to the Bishop of Botswana.