

HIS BEATITUDE AT THE FUNCTIONS FOR GREEK NATIONAL DAY IN SOUTH AFRICA

On 25th March 2010, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the Chapel of the Metropolis.

He then left immediately for SAHETI School where he attended the festive celebrations for Greek National Day, together with His Eminence Metropolitan Seraphim of Johannesburg and Pretoria and His Eminence Sergios of the Good Hope and Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos, Director of the Private Patriarchal Office, where he greeted the Scholars as follows:

"I am here at the famous SAHETI School, and I am very moved. You, the scholars of this beautiful school, have in your hearts a love for your country, South Africa. This is a country that has suffered much but is very beautiful and has particular and unique possibilities.

On the occasion of the anniversary of 25th March 1821, I am with you and from my heart, I want to tell all you young people standing before me, Greeks, Cypriots, South Africans, of every nationality, something which shows the multi-ethnic character of SAHETI, the school of the active Greeks of South Africa. Looking at you, the children of SAHETI, one ascertains that we can live together, work together, and create productive and developmental conditions and prerequisites and progress in every department of society, all of us together, the people of Africa. The tangible proof of this, is you, the children of South Africa who live and study together in harmony in this place.

However, we cannot lose sight of the reason that we are here today. It is the school celebration of the National anniversary of 1821. Today, the immortal Greek soul bows reverently before that miracle which the faith of the Greeks created, before that majesty which our fathers and forefathers achieved by spilling their blood "for faith and country".

My blessed children, today I am here as your Spiritual Father, Your Patriarch and I bring to you the embrace and true love of the Church of Alexandria. I came with joy to meet you and I want you all to know that my thoughts and concern will always be with you, your families and your worthy teachers who work for your good and your progress.

I would love to be able to hear your problems and whichever justified worries you have.

In this country, in which the love and providence of God ordered that you will live, there is a great Leader who gave his entire life so that this place could prosper and progress and develop in the contemporary difficult and competitive universal society. This is the charismatic Nelson Mandela, who had a favourite phrase, Hamba Kahle, which means to go slowly, surely, with decency, prudence and peace, because then you will succeed.

To all of you who study here at SAHETI, with thirst and a sense of honour. Tomorrow many of you could be in Government or in "key" positions in the country, either in Finance, in Trade, in the Church or in Journalism. However, you must always remember that this country has need of co-operation, peaceful co-existence and unity for all under the eternal and moral values of Christian faith as well as those values of Nelson Mandela. His history alone among us today is a guarantee of unity and peace, hope for the future of South Africa. How beautiful life is when we

hear his words following his release from prison:

:I would like to return to my village and to walk in the valleys, the hills and the rivers where I grew up". He had a magnificence of spirit, a superiority and a simplicity of thought, philosophical speech which expresses the magnificence of a man who served man and society with self-sacrifice.

I love you all and I give you my Patriarchal embrace that fits all of you and I bless you with all the strength of my being.

My children, live and be happy, many years in health, strength, with progress in your studies and in virtue; may you be deemed worthy of a happy Pascha with your families, both you and your teachers, for as Alexander the Great said: "I owe my life to my parents and my good life to my teachers".

He then went on to visit the Cyprus Brotherhood of South Africa, where he attended an official lunch hosted in his honour by His Excellency the High Commissioner of Cyprus, Mr Argyros Antoniou and the Chairman of the Brotherhood Mr Cleopas Elias.

His Excellency Mr Antoniou welcomed His Beatitude and mentioned the Cyprus National problem and asked His Beatitude to pray for a solution. The Chairman of the Brotherhood also addressed His Beatitude.

After speaking of the religious and national meaning of the anniversary of the 25th March 1821, expressed his heartfelt gratitude to His Beatitude Chrysostomos of Cyprus and His Excellency the President of Cyprus Mr. Dimitrios Christofias for their ceaseless assistance to the multifaceted work of the ancient Patriarchate in Africa, and prayed for a just solution to the Cyprus issue. Commemorative gifts were then exchanged.

Present at the official lunch were His Eminence Seraphim, Metropolitan of Johannesburg and Pretoria, their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Ukraine and Belarus, the Consul General of Greece in Johannesburg, the Consul General of Cyprus in Pretoria, the Consul General of Cyprus in Mozambique, representatives of communities, brotherhoods, societies, etc.

On the evening of the same day, Mrs Vasiliki Gounaris, Consul General of Greece in Johannesburg, hosted an official dinner in honour of His Beatitude at the Consular residence, attended also by the Metropolitans of Johannesburg and the Good Hope, His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece, the Chairman of SAE Africa-Asia, the Vice Chairmen of the Federation of Hellenic Communities, the Chairman of the Hellenic Community and Advocate George Bizos, SC.

Mrs Gounaris welcomed His Beatitude and spoke of the significance of the presence of the spiritual Father of the Orthodox Christians of the African continent in South Africa.

His Beatitude thanked her for her kind hospitality, spoke of the majesty of the Hellenic spirit, which can create great things wherever it is, emphasized the importance of the Greek Consulates for the support of Greeks living abroad, and gave the Consul General a silver tray with the emblem of the ancient Patriarchate of Alexandria.

