

# **HIS BEATITUDE AWARDS DIPLOMAS TO THE GRADUATES OF THE ST ATHANASIOS PATRIARCHAL ACADEMY**

On 23rd May 2013 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa officiated at the ceremony of award of diplomas of the African student graduates of the "St Athanasios" Patriarchal Academy, for the academic cycle 2011-2013, accompanied by His Eminence Gabriel, Metropolitan of Leontopolis and Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria.

The ceremony, which took place in the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria, was opened by the students themselves, melodiously singing Ecclesiastical hymns. His Beatitude spoke, praising the defining contribution of training indigenous people and the development of particular skills in order to expand the missionary cells of the Most Holy Church of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark, which relieve the increasing pastoral and humanistic needs of the African continent.

Personally addressing the students of the Academy, His Beatitude praised both their pride and conscientiousness during the fulfillment of their academic duties, as well as their consistent participation in the divine worship and prayer according to Orthodox ethos and ethics. He called on them to continue their service and witness in Christ throughout Africa according to the missionary manner of the Apostles, not as Aristotle. He assured them that he would follow their progress in Church life, administration and the philanthropic efforts of the Holy Metropolises in their countries of origin, closely and he will contribute to their

needs paternally. In conclusion he asked them to keep in the phylactery of their hearts the principle, which he often heard them repeating, that love is the real value of mankind.

His Beatitude gave particular praise to the Principal, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Narkissos Gkamo, who tirelessly over two years showed his concern so that the students could experience the inseparable unit of Church and Education. He offered particular thanks to both the Hegumen of the Monastery of St Savvas, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Meletios Koumanis, as well as the academic staff of the Patriarchal Academy, for their tireless efforts to transpose into the students values and knowledge both in the pews and at the desks.

His Beatitude expressed his thanks through the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria who was present, Mr. Christos Kapodistrias, to Greece and particularly to the Ministry of Education, Religion, Culture and Sport for its valuable contribution to the orderly operation of the Academy. He thanked all the pious Christians of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria through its first Vice Chairman Mr. Nicholas Kopelos, for the love with which they surrounded the boarder students of the Patriarchal Academy, during the two years of their stay in the city of Alexander.

Following the award ceremony, a celebratory reception took place during which the students expressed their gratitude to the Patriarch by interpreting Greek traditional songs in his honour.