

HIS BEATITUDE HONOURS ELDER METROPOLITAN

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa honoured the oldest Hierarch of the Alexandrian Church Elder Metropolitan Paul of Memphis during the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Church of Sts Constantine and Helen in Johannesburg on Sunday 18th May 2008, by awarding him the Highest Medal of the Archangel, the highest award of the ancient Patriarchate.

Elder Metropolitan Paul of Memphis served the Hellenes of South Africa with genuine love and self-sacrifice during the years from 1968-1998, and this year he completes 65 years of service as a priest and hierarch to the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Deeply moved during the patriarchal Divine Liturgy, in the presence of the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus, the Consul General of Greece and all the representatives of the community organizations of South Africa, the Primate of the Second-Throne Patriarchate remembered the day of his enthronement to the Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of St Mark, when the honoured hierarch gave him the Patriarchal crown. Metropolitan Paul thanked him for the great honour and "for all the days he had spent with Patriarch Theodoros" which he said he would never forget. Metropolitan Seraphim of Johannesburg spoke about the work undertaken by his predecessor Hierarch, to whom he expressed the gratitude of the local Church of South Africa for his great and long contribution.

His Beatitude also conducted memorial prayers for the repose of the souls of the three late Metropolitans of Johannesburg, Isidoros, Nikodimos and Ioannis.

Immediately following the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy, the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg held a function for its 100th anniversary at the hall next to the historic church of Ss Constantine and Helen, the first church built by the Greek immigrants to Johannesburg. In welcoming His Beatitude, the Chariman of the Hellenic Community of Johannesburg Mr. Baladakis, said: "it is this church of Ss Constantine in Johannesburg which gathered into its Hellenic and Orthodox embrace the first Greek immigrants to South Africa and it is this community which became the home of the Greeks for a century".

His Beatitude then saluted all Greeks, emphasizing the significance of their struggle to keep their traditions so many thousands of kilometres away from their homeland. An exchange of gifts then took place.