

HIS BEATITUDE PAYS A FIRST HISTORIC VISIT TO SIERRA LEONE

On the morning of 22nd February 2012 His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa arrived in Sierra Leone from Nigeria, in order to pay his first historic pastoral visit to this Holy Diocese of the Throne, which he established in 2010, accompanied by His Eminence George, Metropolitan of Accra who arrived from his Ecclesiastical province for this reason.

At the Airport in the capital Freetown, the Alexandrian Primate was welcomed by the Patriarchal Vicar of Sierra Leone the Very reverend Archimandrite Themistocles Adamopoulos, the clergy, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and volunteer Missionaries from Australia. He was then taken in a motorcade to a ferry boat to get to the capital.

During the hour-long journey in the ferry boat the Patriarch admired the similarity of the capital to a Greek island and his views became even more touching when all the passengers asked for his blessings and his prayers. On the waterfront he saw hundreds of children who were waiting for him, singing and dancing in traditional African rhythms.

He was welcomed there by His Excellency the Mayor Mr. Gabril Kamu, all other officials of the city, students of the schools of the centre of the city and many people including children who study at Muslim schools. The motorcade then took him to the Town Hall where the official welcome took place by the Mayor who, in his address stressed the significance of the visit of the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Africa to Sierra Leone, thanked him for the contribution of the Orthodox Church to the reconstruction of the country following the many

years of civil war and gave him the gold key of the city as a small token of appreciation for his contribution. In his reply the Patriarch mentioned his wish to visit this suffering country, to bless the ecclesiastical work in the area and to share with all the people the love, peace and hope of God. He then awarded the Mayor the honour of the Lion of St Mark.

In the afternoon His Beatitude received a courtesy visit from the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Freetown, His Grace Edward Tamba Charles and of the Charge d' Affaires of the Embassy of Egypt the Honourable Mr. Tamer Adel Gaith. His Beatitude later attended a reception hosted in his honour by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Ebun Aforo Jusu, with the presence of Minsters, Ambassadors and other dignitaries of the local community.