

HIS BEATITUDE VISITS THE CHURCH OF ALBANIA

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa is on a visit to the Church of Albania from the 31st October.

The Alexandrian Primate arrived at the International Airport in Tirana together with His Eminence Jonah of Kampala and His Eminence Ieronymos of Mwanza, as well as His Grace Nikodimos Bishop of Nitria and Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo. He was welcomed by His Eminence Anastasios Archbishop of Tirana, Dyrachion and All Albania, the Members of the Holy Synod and a multitude of clergy and faithful from all the church provinces of the Albanian Church.

A doxology was sung at the Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos during which His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios addressed the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Africa, emotionally remembering amongst other things his first meeting with His Beatitude Theodoros when he was a first year student at the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens, as well as the first years of his missionary service in Africa, and the first Divine Liturgy in Kampala, in May 1964.

Thanking His Beatitude, His Beatitude Theodoros emphasized his contribution to the Missionary activity of the Second Throne Patriarchate. "You sowed the seed of mission in Africa, relighting the missionary conscience of the Orthodox Church in general...", stressed the Patriarch, who also turned back time remembering his student years, where he "first heard of Africa from the then Bishop of Androusa and present Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania, not yet knowing that God would lead me to that continent..."

He also praised the multifaceted work of Archbishop Anastasios in the Church of Albania. "At a moment when Africa is progressing in the distribution of the message of the Gospel, we admire the Church of Albania, which, under the inspirational direction of Your Beatitude, is progressing enormously, so much so that we see the miracles of Divine Grace in the work you do. The years and generations follow each other, and sometime, everyone will read that the splendid person of Archbishop Anastasios, who spread the Gospel and raised hope everywhere, passed through Africa and Albania. You are well-known not only in Orthodoxy, but throughout the world. You have taught us how to be genuine missionaries", ended the Patriarch.

According to the programme, the two Primates then visited the Holy Monastery of St Blaise, the Theological Academy of the "Resurrection of Christ", the Skete of the Myrrh-bearers, the Women's Hostel and the "Hope" Orthodox Children's Home. They also planted two olive trees (saplings) as symbols of unity and cooperation between the Patriarchate of Alexandria and the Church of Albania.

At noon, His Beatitude attended a lunch with the teaching staff and students of the Theological Academy "The Resurrection of Christ". As well as the teachers and staff of the "Holy Cross" Ecclesiastical High School where His Beatitude Anastasios expressed the view that in future Albanian missionaries should also be sent to Africa to assist the missionary effort.

The historical visit by His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to Albania is taking place from the 31st October to 5th November 2009. On Sunday 1st November a Primate's Con-celebration will be celebrated at the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Tirana. ON the following day, the Primate of the Throne of St Mark will meet with His Excellency the President

of the Republic of Albania, Mr. Bamir Topi, His Excellency the Prime Minister Mr. Sali Berisha, the Mayor of Tirana Mr. Edi Rama as well as with other senior officers of Albania.