

INAUGURATION OF THE MISSIONARY CENTRE IN LUSAKA

On Saturday 9th May 2009, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa conducted the Service of Consecration of the Holy Church of St Basil and St Dimitrios, in the newly built Missionary Centre in Lusaka. From early in the morning many people and many Ambassadors of Orthodox countries and others, had filled the forecourt of the church waiting for the arrival of the Patriarch. When he arrived the African Orthodox broke out into songs and dance, welcoming their guest. The government was represented at the consecration and inauguration ceremonies by the Minister of Education Mr Godfrey Lungwangwa. During the service His Beatitude explained in detail whatever was being done to the impressed congregation who were witnessing this for the first time. Following the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude gave the new church a silver decorated cross for blessing, and congratulated His Grace Bishop Ioakeim of Zambia for the enormous work he has done in a few years, saying that the entire missionary centre is one of the very best of the Patriarchate in Africa. He then distributed antidoron and commemorative gifts to all present and gave pectoral crosses and other gifts to all the African Orthodox Christians.

The inauguration of the model and modern school which was built with funding by the Hellenic Aid of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Greece, together with the NGO Euronem. In his brief address His Grace Ioakeim spoke of the difficulties he faced for the completion of this enormous work which is for the people of Zambia, and thanked the Apostoliki Diakonia of the Church of Greece, the Missioanry Societies in Greece and all who contributed and still contribute to the development and spreading of Orthodoxy in Zambia. The Minister of Education spoke next, and he thanked the Orthodox Church for its great contribution to the people of Zambia, stressing the necessity of continuing these humanistic works for the ease of the poor. The President of Euronem, Mrs Nasia Michalopoulou also spoke. The ceremony ended with the unveiling of a commemorative plaque and an address by the Patriarch, he spoke words of love for all present, emphasized the value of learning and how much the Orthodox Church contributes to this, a prime example being the inaugurated school. He asked all to continue supporting their Bishop so that he might be able to continue his work to the glory of the Lord and the benefit of all the people of the country.

A festive programme then followed with traditional African dances and songs. An agape meal followed hosted in honour of the Patriarch and attended by all.

That night His Beatitude visited the home of the Ambassador of Egypt where he was warmly welcomed and attended a dinner hosted in his honour and attended by members of the Zambian community including the Minister of Education. The Egyptian representative in Zambia welcomed the Primate of the Alexandrian Church with great emotion, spoke of his personality and emphasized the respect he enjoys of the President and the Government of Egypt. He also said: "Your Beatitude, I do not welcome you to my home, because it is your home, and a host is never welcomed to his home... From the first moment when you arrived in Zambia, your presence and your words of love, peace and solidarity have touched our hearts, have moved us, have awoken our conscience and have pushed us to recover and take strength to continue, having always God and man as our rule". Having been deeply moved by the words of the Egyptian Ambassador, the Patriarch Thanked him for his love and hospitality and invited all present to visit Egypt to see the development in the country and to admire the sweetness and kindness of the hospitable people. He then gave the Ambassador a commemorative gift.