

INAUGURATION OF THE PATRIARCHAL MANSION MUSEUMS BY HIS BEATITUDE

On Sunday 24th November 2013, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa conducted the Patriarchal and Synodal Concelebration at the Holy Church of the Annunciation of the Theotokos with the participation of the Members of the Holy Synod, the holy clergy and the Christian faithful.

Present at the Divine Liturgy were His Excellency the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. K. Gerontopoulos, His Excellency the Governor of Alexandria General T. Magdi, Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus in Cairo, Messrs. Ch. Lazaris and S. Liasides respectively, the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr. Ch. Kapodistrias as head of a group of Consuls of foreign countries in the Great City, the Defence Attaché Captain S. Petrakis, the Honourable Chairmen of the Hellenic Communities of Cairo and Alexandria Mr. Ch. Kavalis and Mr. I. Siokas respectively, the Erudite Chairman of the Order of the Paravalenes Mr. Sp. Kamalakis, the Erudite Chairman of the Brotherhood of Office Bearers Mr. Th. Panagopoulos, Chairmen of Hellenic Societies and Associations, and others.

Before the end of the Eucharistic gathering His Beatitude awarded Patriarchal Offices to three distinguished personalities in politics and medicine. He awarded the Office of Lady of the Churches to the Euro-parliamentarians Rodi Kratsa-Tsaggaropoulou and Eleni Theocharous, and the Office of Archon Aktouarios to the Dermatologist Dr. Athanasios Petrides, Director of the 3rd Dermatological Clinic of the Andreas Syggros Hospital.

The Ceremony of the Inauguration of the Patriarchal Mansion Museums followed, during which His Beatitude said, in his address:

Today marks another milestone in the two-thousand year journey of the Apostolic Church of Alexandria, as two supremely aesthetical museums of history and memory within the Patriarchal See are inaugurated.

Today we are inaugurating the Patriarchal Archaeological Museum, which is situated in the underground water reservoirs which were discovered by chance ten years ago, during the renovation works of the Patriarchal Mansion.

The area in itself is an architectural monument, a valuable remnant of a complex irrigation system from Greco-Roman Alexandria. It was transformed into a museum to house Pharaonic, Hellenistic, Roman and Islamic era exhibitions, both from Alexandria as well as other areas in Egypt. Burial masks of the New Kingdom of the Pharaohs, Ptolemaic headgear, Byzantine column heads, glazed vessels of Islamic style, numismatic collections co-exist harmoniously and call on the art-loving visitor to examine the timeless stigma of mankind and cultures in the land of the Nile.

Today we are inaugurating the Patriarchal Sacristy on the first floor of the Patriarchal Library. From now on, if someone wishes to approach the hall where the manuscript codices are kept, he would pass through the exhibition of ecclesiastical artifacts which record the witness and ministry of the Throne of St Mark, often despite the isolation of time. Icons of the Cretan School as well as Russian style, Gospel books with elaborate bindings and liturgical appurtenances, Hierarchal vestments, pectoral crosses, Miters, tiaras and pastoral staffs of Alexandrian Patriarchs, comprise a palimpsest of faith and art.

The motivating force behind the undertaking of this memorial initiative was none other than our solid understanding that whatever we do for ourselves, dies with us. However, whatever we do for others and for the world, remains immortal.

Of course, these significant works could not be designed or implemented without the assistance and support of the Egyptian State Authorities, who understand our mission. And naturally it would not be possible to bring them to a successful conclusion, without the enormous expenditure which was undertaken kindly and generously on the one hand by the noble Stavros Niarchos Institute for the patriarchal Archaeological Museum and on the other hand by the charitable Organization of Football Match Predictions (OPAP) for the patriarchal Sacristy.

We are grateful for these contributions, as our dream is taking on substance for the preservation in time and the systematic promotion of the rich heritage of our Patriarchate. We are grateful, because pilgrims will henceforth form a clearer image of the fact that our Patriarchate is the ark of the Greek Orthodox tradition in Egypt. We are grateful, because the tourist in the city of Alexander will henceforth discover a vibrant cell of culture, bearing inalienably imprinted on his being, knowledge and experiences of thousands of years.

To all who contributed to the realization of our plans of reformation, to all who shared our perception that the aim is nothing other than a dream with a plan and a time limit, to all who labored to make reality all that once was only a plan on paper, we express the pleasure of the Apostolic Throne of Alexandria, praying that the Lord who grants all gifts will richly bestow His blessing on you all.

We salute this dual museum transformation on the one hand as a decisive enhancement of the self-awareness of our Patriarchate within historic space time, and on the other as a priceless heritage of creative breath for the future. And this is because what we now visualize immovable within the display units of the museums, was once life. And the experience of life gained helps us all to match the old with the new, the past with the present and the future. Amen!

On this distinguished day, an official lunch was hosted at the Hellenic Naval Club of Alexandria, and in the evening a musical event was held in the grounds of the Patriarchate with the participation of the Vocal Teacher Zafiri Koukouseli and the Songwriter and Guitarist Apostolos Mosios.