

INAUGURATION OF THE SEMINARY OF THE HOLY DIOCESE OF MADAGASCAR BY HIS BEATITUDE

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa praised the contribution made by the Greeks of Australia to the Missionary work of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, when he inaugurated the Seminary for the future priests of Madagascar.

“I thank all who contributed to this work, but especially our brothers and sisters who live in Australia, for their love for our efforts to keep the flame of Orthodoxy alive in Africa, by giving financially to help complete this new school for the priests in Alasora in Madagascar”, said His Beatitude, not hiding his contentment in the building of yet another ecclesiastical educational institute.

“We thank you, the Greeks, living in the far off continent of Australia, from our hearts! You never forget our missions, there in Australia where you worship Christ. We thank you for all that you contribute”.

This institute, which is a seminary of Orthodox staff from the missions, has been built in an idyllic area, at the edge of the verdant valley of Alasora and is added to the Patriarchal Schools of Alexandria, Nairobi, and Kinshasa. Its aim is to educate the staff of the Church which will later be used in their towns and countries. A Byzantine church has also been erected in the grounds of this traditional building and is dedicated to the memory of St John the Theologian.

The inauguration produced moments of emotion as the Patriarchate of Alexandria honoured him who first thought of developing this idea, the late Bishop Nektarios of Madagascar, who was tragically killed together with the late, ever-

remembered Patriarch Petros VII of Alexandria in the helicopter crash of 11th September 2004. For this reason and in the presence of the current Bishop of Madagascar, His Grace Ignatios, who is continuing the work of his predecessor, the Alexandrian Primate unveiled the bust of the late Bishop Nektarios, emphasizing that the body of the late Bishop is still in the arms of the Aegean Sea "but his soul and his love are in Madagascar". During this same rite, His Beatitude inaugurated the Museum containing the personal vestments and articles of the late Bishop.

A financial contribution to the creation of the Educational Institute, the museum and in general to the missionary efforts in Madagascar, was also made by an important missionary society from Thessaloniki, the Brotherhood of External Orthodox Missions of Thessaloniki, who Chairman, Mr Vaios Pratzos was present to give his own honour to the memory of the late Bishop. Also present was Mrs Matina Kouvousi, a young lady who has dedicated her life to the missionary effort and to whom the Alexandrian Primate gave the honorary title of "Deaconness of the Patriarchate of Alexandria", a title given for the very first time in the history of the Orthodox Church of Africa.

His Beatitude donated a silver lamp that, as he said, "the light from the teachings of St John the Theologian", who he called the Apostle of love, "would shine". "A light which would illumine the passage of the new priests of the Orthodox Church and would lead them to harvest in the far flung areas of their country, to the pure countries of Africa, the continent of the future".