

NINTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION OF HIS BEATITUDE

On 9th October 2013, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa officiated at the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Patriarchal Cathedral of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria, on the occasion of the completion of nine years since his election and elevation to the Apostolic and Patriarchal throne of St Mark.

Present on this distinguished day to join in the prayers were His Eminence Gabrile Metropolitan of Leontopolis, patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria, His Grace Nikodimos Bishop of Nitria Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo and His Grace Niphon Bishop of Babylonia, Hegumen of the Holy Monastery of St George. Also present were the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr. Christos Kapodistrias, the Honourable Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr. Ioannis Siokas, as well as Chairmen of Societies, and Associations of the Great City.

His Beatitude was addressed by the Hegumen of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Meletios Koumanis. He said specifically:

“You are the successor to the Throne of Mark, and although you are many years after him, you do not fall behind his way of life and his virtue”

With these words from the ingenious life of your holy predecessor, John the Almsgiver, Patriarch of Alexandria, allow me Your Beatitude, Father and Master, to express the pride and jubilant emotions in the Lord of us all, for today's ninth anniversary of your election to the resplendent throne of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark.

It is an anniversary that is not simply customary, but meaningful, as the election of a new Patriarch to the rudder of the Church, as is even that of every new Bishop, is not only an historic ecclesiastical event, but ensures also the apostleship of the succession, as it also comprises the connecting link of the spiritual continuance in the ministry of the evangelization of the People of God.

For nine consecutive years, the track of your Patriarchal journey has been recorded as illuminated, witnessing to and confirming that “a right Spirit” “full of grace” effected your election.

Having already given witness of a consistent ministry within the Patriarchate in many positions, as the Exarch in Russia, the Patriarchal Representative in Athens, Patriarchal Vicar in Alexandria, Metropolitan of Cameroon and Metropolitan of Zimbabwe, you were called on by the Venerable Hierarchs of the Alexandrian Church not only to

continue, but also to seal with your personal mark, the 2000-year journey and the cruciform contribution of our Ancient Patriarchate to the contemporary world.

Your Beatitude, I have not enough time to narrate all that you with your vigorous grace and strength from the Lord have done during the nine years of your glorious tenure as Patriarch. Please allow me to briefly focus on one of the characteristic features which define you.

Perhaps the greatest grace which history will remember you by in the passing of the ages, is none other than your love and your kindness.

Continuing the work begun by your late predecessor Patriarch Petros, for the revitalization, organization and renovation of the entire Patriarchate, you did not stand on insulated rituals, neither did you allow yourself to be crushed beneath the wheels of cold organizational routine, which discolours even the most divine works. But from the very beginning, you gave an ardent breath, a loving feeling to everyone around you. This characteristic driving force in your Patriarchal ministry, was and is always the exact application of the first and great commandment of our Lord. Love!

What an excellent combination!!! A love that works humbly and productively and does not look for drum rolls. The Patriarch's love to all indiscriminately. To eminent and to nameless, young and old, strong and weak, impoverished and suffering. The same love towards the appreciative and the ungrateful.

How many times have all of us who are blessed to be living in the Patriarchal Court not been witness to the powerful expression of your love and kindness. How many times have we not heard when the climax of Patriarchal responsibility and anxiety hastens to give solutions and to contribute in many ways, always with love, to difficult problems.

To comfort, to overlook, to console, to heal, to cure, to provide, to commiserate.

How many times did you not sweat blood to care as any other crusader of Love for the hungry on the African continent, the orphans of the civil wars, the sick who have no medication, the suffering children in the garbage, the care of unmarried mothers, the amputee victims of human evil, AIDS and trafficking. Not only materially, ethically and spiritually.

But how many time also did you not try to heal evil with the antidote of your loving kindness, applying the words of St Paul: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

Besides it is this power of love which you proclaimed a few days ago in Rome, paraphrasing, or rather correcting, the Cartesian principle "I think therefore I am" to "I LOVE therefore I am". I exist through love and in love, which has the power to renew the World and to transform it by making it better.

Your Beatitude, forgive me because I was not able to convey the accuracy of your charismatic image as exactly as I wished and should have. Besides, everyone knows that the more important the person, so much more difficult is the work of the artist.

Despite all this, what is required is not only the recognition of the "prototype" and its fruitless admiration, but that which is prescribed by St Chrysostom in one of his homilies:

"We admire what you have achieved, we aspire to your qualities,
and we praise to others your gallantry"

Most Divine and Most Holy Master, you are the inspirer of love and the example of kindness to us all. We are grateful to you for this, and we pray to our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ that you will continue your excellent piloting of the Alexandrian ship and your glorious tenure as Patriarch, in robust health, for many and good years. Amen.

After the Liturgical synaxis His Beatitude received the wishes of the Hierarchs, the holy clergy and the pious flock of the city of Alexander in the guest hall of the Holy Monastery.