

ORDINATION OF HIS GRACE CHRYSOSTOMOS BISHOP OF VERENIKI (BERENICE) BY HIS BEATITUDE

On Saturday 6 December 2014, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, conducted in the Holy Patriarchal Church of St Nicholas in Cairo, the ordination of His Grace Chrysostomos Bishop of Berenice. Participating in the Eucharistic Gathering and the ordination of His Grace were Their Eminences Theophylaktos of Tripoli, Nicholas of Ermopolis, Gabriel of Leontopolis, Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria, Nikodimos of Memphis Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, Niphon of Pilousion, Hegumen of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St George Old Cairo. Many faithful from the community of the Egyptian capital came to the Church which celebrated its Feast Day.

During his address His Beatitude spoke with emotion, saying:

Your Grace elected Bishop Chrysostomos of Berenice and my dear brother in Christ, Chrysostomos,

“He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory”. (1 Timothy 3:16). With this most succinct account, in only two simple lines, Paul, the great Apostle of the Nations described the entire content of divine providence. How God the indescribable, hidden in the unapproachable darkness of the Old Testament, at the appointed time was incarnate in the flesh, took on flesh and bones, became a man like us, for one reason only; so that according to our Father Athanasios the Great He could “stop the decay”, “that we might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

At this wonderful period that we are living through, our preparation to celebrate the incarnation of God the Word, the Holy Nativity, let us uplift our minds with the Theological thoughts of our Holy Fathers, and with the efficacious intercessions of our Great Hierarch, St Nicholas, who whom we celebrate today, in this most beautiful Holy Church. How did St Nicholas manage to become an ecumenical Saint? How is it that in every corner of the world, on mountains and at the sea, in villages and great cities there are magnificent churches as well as remote chapels dedicate to his name? His troparion gives one explanation: St Nicholas was an example of faith, and an image of meekness; a teacher of abstinence, and with his humility he was exalted, becoming, according to the Apostle Paul, “a useful vessel” (2 Timothy 2:22). He spent his entire sanctified life ministering inconspicuously to mankind, discreetly assisting them materially and spiritually. With his holy example he teaches us that whoever leaves others untouched by his presence, and his only relationship with them is that of service, he is loved. On the contrary, he who constantly moans, defending himself, his opinion, his right, he who seeks positions and recognition, remains alone and everyone avoids him.

Your Grace Chrysostomos, elected Bishop of Vereniki and my dear child, You have also walked this blessed path of humility and obedience throughout your priestly ministry to this day, wherever God’s providence led you, particularly in Libya where, as Chancellor of the Holy Metropolis of Tripoli, together with your Metropolitian Theophylaktos, with dedication and self sacrifice to the last, you devoted yourself to quietly serving the local Church, in conditions of war, not lowering the banner of duty, becoming a living example of patience and obedience to the Church, to be copied.

This great virtue of your obedience, was rewarded by the Holy Synod of our Patriarchate, following our proposal and exhortation, electing you as Bishop of

the once bright Diocese of Berenice, which was one of the five Dioceses making up the Holy Metropolis of Pentapolis in Libya.

You are unquestionably worthy, due to your well-known ecclesiastical conviction, to work and to be proved to be a good Bishop, working towards the cultivation of your spiritual field which the Church of Alexandria has entrusted to you. You are admittedly able to become equal to the noble expectations of your Patriarch, who expects much from you.

According to the example of the Great Hierarch Nicholas whose Feast we celebrate today, you should protect the orphans, to feed the hungry, to be merciful to the impoverished, to assist the sick and those in prisons, to be beside the least of our brothers and sisters "for whom Christ died" (Romans 14:15). Always remember that the journey of a Hierarch is a continuous and sacrificial witness of love. And all of this with the grace of God who strengthens you, and the genuine paternal love and prayers of your Patriarch who will tirelessly be beside you, praying that you will be a like our Arch Shepherd Christ in the dissemination of the gospel message of love.

My dear Father Chrysostomos,

At your personal Pentecost, your ordination as Bishop, together with the love of all who came to rejoice with you, there is the invisible presence of the entire body of the great Saints of our Church of Alexandria, our great Hierarchs and the Venerable ones of the Thebaid desert, especially St Nicholas who celebrates this day, as well as he who was ordained as Hierarch at this same altar, St Nektarios of Pentapolis. I pray that God will grant you on your Hierarchal journey, the forbearance and the merciful hearts of these our Hierarch Saints, as well as their unaffectedness and their patience.

Enter, therefore, Father Chrysostomos, "the inner sanctuary of the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:19).

His Grace Chrysostomos said:

Your Beatitude,
Venerable Holy Hierarchs,
Venerable Father and beloved brothers and sisters,

Today "We celebrate Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit". The Holy Spirit has gathered us today in this most beautiful Patriarchal Church of St Nicholas, in prayer and praise of the Holy Trinity.

I render praise and gratitude to the Triune God, "for all the great, wondrous and glorious things are being done to me the least, during these days".

I am overcome with fear as I consider the importance of the rank of Bishop. A Bishop ought to be as pure and saintly as the Holy Angels in heaven. " St John Chrysostom teaches that "the Priesthood is conducted on earth, but has a heavenly order of things. It is not a human, nor an Angel, or an Archangel, or even any other created power, but the Paraclete himself who orders this".

For this, the Bishop has to perform the work of the Great Holy Apostles, a most holy mission of which the center and aim is the salvation of mankind for which God "gave His Only-begotten Son".

A Bishop is called on by the Lord to shepherd his reasonable flock according to His example, not as a paid Shepherd, but as a good shepherd, prepared to give even his life for his sheep.

I pray though that through my hope in the compassion of God's mercy who up until today has sustained me, guided me venerable, given me abundantly of His compassion

and mercy, enlightened me and wondrously protected me, that even now He will strengthen my weakness, so that His power will be made perfect in my faintness.

I also place my hopes in His Immaculate and Ever-Virgin Mother, the Forerunner, the Great Martyr George whose shield protected me many times, St Nicholas whom we celebrate today and our patron Saint, St Nektarios, the Wonderworker.

Allow me Your Beatitude at this sacred moment, to express my gratitude also to beloved and revered people, who played a significant role during my life and my humble ministry.

Firstly to you, Your Beatitude, Officiator at my personal Pentecost, who have surrounded me with your love and your trust in the ten years in which I have served in your Missionary Patriarchate.

Your smile and the kind words expressed about me, strengthen my ministry. They give me the power and courage to continue. You proposed me for the third rank of the Priesthood, as Bishop. I express to you my boundless respect, my gratitude for ever, my filial love, my obedience and my everlasting promise to pray fervently and unceasingly to the Lord for your health and length of days for the good of Christ Holy Church and our Patriarchate.

With much piety I express my fervent thanks to Their Eminences the Hierarchs who support me with their prayers.

With great emotion and gratitude I turn my mind and my heart to my Elder, the late Metropolitan Damaskinos of Fthiotida, the Hierarch of love, from whose hands I received the two ranks of the Priesthood.

I pray unceasingly for him, for blessed memory and eternal rest with the Righteous and the Saints.

Again, with great emotion, I turn my thoughts to my ever-remembered parents, Margaritis and Panayiota, particularly to my hero father who was kept captive during the harsh years of the occupation.

I turn my mind to the Priest in my village, who bore witness with me, the late father Stavros Douros. He took me on as a child in the Sanctuary and gave me as a complete adult to the Church.

At this time I remember our late and much mourned brother Isidoros, friend, brother, fellow Cyrenian, who at such a young age and so suddenly left us. I believe that he will rejoice today in heaven.

I wholeheartedly thank my earthly family, my beloved sister-in-law Panayiota and my nephews George and Dimitri.

Infinite thanks go also to His Eminence Gabriel, Metropolitan of Leontopolis for his love and concern for me. He has been genuine and is a brother and friend, supporter, always willing and selfless in all things. I owe him a great deal, that is un-repayable, I respect him with particular honour.

I thank His Eminence Chrysostomos Metropolitan of Perissteri from the bottom of my heart who surrounded my humility with his leniency and his purity by showing me trust and care and who, in the difficult times of my life became my swift comforter and my guardian angel. My Spiritual Father Metropolitan Damaskinos of Fthiotida gave me over to his omoforion two months before he died, telling me to obey him because he set him apart and loved him deeply, and he opened the doors of his Metropolis and of his heart and welcomed me at a difficult time for me when I lost both my parents.

I thank him for all that he did and still does for me, I know that his heart rejoices today because he had a burning desire to see me as a Bishop of the Christ's Church.

I thank His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Fthiotoda, the Hierarch of my homeland for his love and his interest every time I visited my village and the Metropolis of Fthiotida.

With much love I see present here my beloved friend and brother, the newly-elected Niphon, Metropolitan of Pilousion. For thirty years we have walked together with common dreams and plans. May his new ministry be productive and fruitful.

I thank also His Eminence Emmanuel Metropolitan of Ptolemais and Archimandrite Emilios Papadakis for their kindnesses to me; my gratitude will be eternal.

I wholeheartedly express thanks to His Eminence Metropolitan Nikodimos of Memphis and the Priests of the Vicariate in Cairo.

To my countrymen brothers and sisters from Libya and Cairo.

I thank the Priest from my Village, Father Michael, who is present, and is representing His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Fthiotida. My beloved brother, today you brought here to me the love of my fellow villagers and the warmth of my homeland, my beloved Tithorea, in Fthiotida.

I thank my brothers here present who came from Greece to be present and to pray together for this joy.

I thank my brother and friend the Very Reverend Archimandrite Gerasimos Karamolengo, Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece and Preacher of the Holy Metropolis of Peristeri, who is representing my much-longed for Spiritual Father Metropolitan Chrysostomos as well as His Grace Clement Bishop of Methoni Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece.

Thanks also go to the Consul General of Greece Mrs Komini, Mr Christos Kavalis Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Cairo, the Chairman of the Arabiic Speakers Mr. Hosni Robert, and our Mother in Cairo Mrs. Stella Kyriazis, Lady of the Churches.

I leave for last and express my particular abundant gratitude and un-repaid obligation to His Eminence my Bishop, till now the Metropolitan Theophylaktos of Tripoli, for all the wise and prudent things I learnt from him in the martyred and harshly suffering Holy Metropolis of Libya.

Your Beatitude, I know well that the office of a Hierarch is huge, huge and arduous. As the Great Father of our Church, St John Chrysostomos says, "This is work, not comfort, concern not enjoyment, a responsible function, not an unexamined principal, paternal protection, not tyrannical autonomy, managed protection not irrational authority".

So I ask that you all pray that I might very humbly accept this great grace of the Holy Spirit, to be proved as a good Hierarch of God, to maintain my Hierarchy unblemished to the end and to cover myself according to the Gospel with all piety and decency.

And now Your Beatitude, deeply emotionally and filled with awareness, I bend my knees and bow my head before the Holy Altar, in submission to my God and Father and accept the Divine Grace which comes to me, which heals weakness and completes what is missing, "Here I am, Lord". Your will be done. Amen.