

PATRIARCHAL CONCELEBRATION IN ALEXANDRIA

On Sunday 21st June 2009, at the Holy Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Theotokos in Alexandria , the Patriarchal Concelebration of the Divine Liturgy by His Beatitude Theodoros II Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa and His Beatitude Ieronymos Archbishop of Athens and All Greece took place.

Also participating from the Church of Greece were His Eminence Ignatios of Arta and His Eminence Nikodimos of Ierissos and from the Alexandrian Church His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Petros of Aksum, His Eminence Makarios of Kenya, His Eminence Kallinikos of Pilousion, His Eminence Nicholas of Ermopolis, His Grace Gabriel of Mareotis and Spyridon of Kanopos. Also present were His Grace Nikodimos of Nitria and His Grace Gennadios of Nilopolis .

The hymns were sung by the Archon Protopsaltis of the Throne Mr Nicholas Katsikas and the Arabic Orthodox choir of Cairo .

Prior to the end of the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude addressed the Archbishop saying: "A few days have passed since Pentecost, the great birthday of our Church. We strongly feel the living and cool breeze of the All Holy Spirit as a continual and renewing presence. It is now the permanent "Presence" in the life of the Church of Him, who promised that He would return and remain with us and would guide the path of the Church, of man and of the world through time. How happy and privileged we should feel with this presence of the Lord among us. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). This official and peaceful (according to the existing order and

tradition) of Your Beatitude and Primate of the Church of Greece, the First in its Ranks and President of its Synod of Hierarchs, gives the position and prospect of continuing the excellent fraternal relations between our two Churches and also underscores our future collaboration on vital, pan-Orthodox, inter-Christian and other issues.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria boasts of its two thousand year presence. It has had times of glory and magnificence and, at others, God's dispensation allowed it to endure trials and various struggles. Until today, though, we humble servants of the Ancient Patriarchal Throne of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark, keep the lamp of faith and its life alight and we journey through the adversities and difficulties which God allows".

He continued, saying: "Your Beatitude, our Orthodox Church is the comfort of the Hellenes, who left their homeland with a secret hope to find a better future. The daily struggles of life do not always allow friends and family to be together but they all meet in the blessed Church and enjoy and renew their love and friendships. The Orthodox Church in Africa, with care, with knowledge of its mission and calling and with great love, with conscientiousness, takes care of its Flock, because they are all members of the Body of Christ, honourable and blessed members".

"We deem it an imperative duty and necessity to bear this witness regarding the important help, both material and moral, given by the Church of Greece, for Your Beatitude's prayers and agreement, and also to express the gratitude and true pleasure of the Second Throne Patriarchate of Alexandria, for all that the Church of Greece offers us.

We are confident that for all these reasons which we have mentioned, Your Beatitude, your important assistance from the Church of Greece to us and the Alexandrian Church will continue to the glory of the Name of God and of Missionary

efforts which He leads and blesses in His rich Grace!

The conscience of the great pastoral responsibilities of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate declares that we must protect the reason-endowed sheep of the Shepherd Jesus Christ which are scattered throughout sun-drenched Africa and for whom He shed His most holy Blood”!

In his reply, the Archbishop of Athens said: “The first and main sign of unity is our common faith, the faith of the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church, the cornerstone of which is Jesus Christ, whose body and blood we received during this Patriarchal concelebration and which is the foundation and guarantee of the timeless passage of the Church in its human and historic expression. A staggering and at the same time essential projection of our common ecclesiological tradition is the transfer of this sacramental atmosphere into the daily life of every Christian, regardless of colour, language or culture – the so called Liturgy following the Divine Liturgy, the conscious expression of the message of the Word of God and its realization in works and acts, in visible signs of the grace of the Saviour Christ to all mankind.

With these principles as a criterion, the Church in Africa , the Patriarchate of Alexandria, has journeyed for many hundreds of years, proving the meeting between God and man, through its missionary journeys which are characteristic of all the clergy of the Alexandrian Church in every corner of the dynamic African continent”.

The Archbishop also emphasized that: “Foreign to many, Your Beatitude, is the percentage of diminishing numbers of Christians in the West and the developed northern countries, while on the other hand, the increased spread of the Word of God in the poor South, the so called third world countries, evokes amazement”.

In ending, Archbishop Ieronymos said: “Let us all ask of

the Incarnate Word Jesus Christ to strengthen and guide the great vision that you have, Your Beatitude and holy brother, for the African earth, the vision of correct spreading of the Gospel Word, for true witness of the application of Christian faith in the person of every one of our fellow humans; a vision in which we participate both personally as well as those members of the Church of Greece, who by the grace of God are here in Alexandria today”.

An exchange of commemorative hierarchal pectoral crosses followed, as well as pectoral crosses to the Hierarchs present. His Beatitude also presented the emblem of the Apostolic Throne to the Archbishop and he in turn gave precious ecclesiastical appurtenances to the Cathedral as well as a pectoral cross to its Dean, Archimandrite Panteleimon Arathymos.

In the Throne Room of the adjacent Patriarchal Mansion , His Beatitude awarded the Archbishop of Athens and All Greece the highest distinction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Great Cross of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark. The Patriarch addressed the Archbishop during the award ceremony, saying:

“Your Beatitude, my predecessors Meletios Pegas and Kyrillos Loukaris instituted the high distinctions which were then resurrected by Patriarch Meletios Metaxakis. Please accept the highest honour distinction as a visible blessing of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark, founder and protector of our Patriarchate and always pray for our Patriarchate and the venerable work of the Missions. Also, receive this award as a blessing for the Apostolic Church of Greece and our Motherland”.

Archbishop Ieronymos thanked the Patriarch and spoke of the accomplishments and talents of the Patriarchs predecessors, who served and contributed much to the Patriarchal Throne.

His Beatitude also awarded these distinctions to the members of the Archbishop's entourage.

The Patriarch also awarded His Excellency the Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece Mr. Theodoros Kassimis the Great Cross of the Phoenix for his contribution to the Alexandrian Church, asking him to pass on the warm thanks of the Church of Alexandria to His Excellency the Prime Minister Mr. Konstantinos Karamanlis, for the support of the Hellenic Government.

He then awarded commemorative gifts to the Head of the Ecclesiastical News Agency "Romfaias", Mr Aimilios Polygenis.

The Venerable Primate of the Throne of St Mark then hosted an official lunch in honour of His Beatitude Archbishop Ieronymos in the Great Patriarchal Refectory.

Present at the functions were: His Excellency the Deputy Foreign Minister Mr Theodoros Kassimis, His Excellency Mr Abdel Abib Governor of Alexandria, through whom the Patriarch of Alexandria thanked His Excellency the President of Egypt Mr Hosni Mubarak for his assistance and protection of the Ancient Patriarchate, Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Greece and Cyprus in Egypt, Mr Ioannis Alexios Zepos and Mr Konstantinos Leontiou, the Honourable Consul General of Greece in Alexandria Mr George Diakofotakis, the Honourable Consul General of Russia, the President of SAE Mr Stephanos Tambakis, the Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria Mr Ioannis Siokas, representatives of community agents and all of the Greek community, as well as the Arabic-speaking community, all of whom warmly welcomed Archbishop Ieronymos.

On the evening of the same day, the Archbishop of Athens was official received by the Hellenic Community of Alexandria at a reception which was hosted by the Hellenic Community of the Great City .