

PATRIARCHAL DIVINE LITURGY FOR THE SACRED MEMORY OF ST KYRILLOS LOUKARIS AND INAUGURATION OF THE PATRIARCHAL HALL IN THE HOLY MONASTERY OF AGARTHOS

On 27th June 2015, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa officiated at Orthros and conducted the Patriarchal Divine Liturgy at the Holy Monastery of his Repentance, the Dormition of the Theotokos, Agarathos, Heraklion, in commemoration of the Saint and glorious hieromartyr Kyrillos Loukaris, together with His Eminence Irenaios Archbishop of Crete, Metropolitans George of Guinea, Andreas of Arkalohori, Kastelli and Viannou, His Grace Meletios of Naucratis and His Grace Makarios of Christopolis.

In his address prior to the Dismissal of the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude thanked the Thrice-Holy God and His Mother the All Holy Virgin, the “Orphan”, Guardian and Protector of the Monastery, for all the gifts and blessings of Heaven during his life and gave to His Eminence Irenaios Archbishop of Crete the Patriarchal Document containing the Synodal Act of the Classification of his Saintly Predecessor Kyrillos Loukaris, Pope of Alexandria and later Patriarch of Constantinople, who was a brother of the Monastery of Agarathos and one of the four Patriarch who draw their spiritual origin from the above named Monastery and made renowned the Alexandrian Throne.

His Eminence Irenaios Archbishop of Crete then accepted the Patriarchal Document, and thanked His Beatitude for his continued love for and remembrance of the great island of

Crete and the Holy Monastery of his Repentance and prayed for the tenth anniversary of his Patriarchal tenure and for the fortieth anniversary of his entry into the priesthood, that he will be strong and have many years, to continue for many decades to glorious Patriarchal and Missionary work and always to give Crete reasons to be joyful, the Place of his origins and his birth.

After the sharing out of the antidoron His Beatitude together with the other dignitaries conducted the inauguration of the "Patriarch Theodoros II, Cretan and Mok of Agarathos" Hall, within the Abbey of the Holy Monastery. In this Hall are exhibited tributes, Patriarchal vestments, honors, and personal effects belonging to His Beatitude, which he donated to the Monastery of his Repentance.

In conclusion, rewarding the efforts, ethos, contribution and devotion of the Honorable Mr. Stavros Arnaoutakis, Regional Governor of Crete, through whose care the Hall was constructed, he awarded him the Superior Commander of the Lion of the Order of Alexandria. In his reply Mr. Arnaoutakis thanked His Beatitude for the honour and assured him that with all his strength he would stand by the works of the Church and of the Missionary Alexandrian Throne, saying that it is an honour for Crete that one of its children would preside over the Holy Synthronon of the Alexandrian Church.

After the usual treats a festive lunch was held in the Refectory of the Holy Monastery during which the Erudite Mr. Theodoros Panagopoulos, Archon Great Protekdikos and President of the Office bearers of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, gave an inspirational address about the Person of the Patriarch on the occasion of the completion of a decade of Patriarchal tenure.

Everyone present wished His Beatitude a long and glorious Patriarchal tenure so that he will grant many joys to the Ancient Alexandrian Throne to the glory of the Moost Holy Name

of God and the praise of His Church.

The inspired and emotional speech given by Theodoros II, Patriarch of Alexandria, on the inauguration of the Patriarchal Hall, follows:

“It has been said that it does not matter which path you choose. Suffice that the path you choose to follow, you will follow without fear and without ambition. And suffice it that the path has a heart.

And the path of my priestly life began here, on 15th August 1973, when I centred myself on the historic Monastery of Agarathos, as a young man and with my mother’s blessing, was grafted into this deep-rooted monastic wild olive tree, which for centuries proudly stands in the centre of the dispersed monastic memories of my birthplace, Crete.

The path of my priestly life, which began at the Monastery of Agarathos, held no fear because it was here that I was re-baptized in the springs of ancestral Orthodoxy, which the furnace of time patiently and persistently defied. This patience and persistence were personified by the three monks of this Brotherhood, who went to serve a poor but precious Throne and a small but patient flock: the Alexandrian Patriarchs Sylvester, St Meletios Pigas and St Kyrillos Loukaris.

All three kept the Church of Alexandria upright in times financially unlucky, religiously dangerous and nationally painful. All three developed a laborious international action on an inter-Orthodox and inter-church level. All three fought external propaganda and influence. They wrote, preached, traveled and gave of themselves for God and people. They gave form to that quality of Cretans, which Nikos Kazantzakis sums up in the words of his Ascetic life: “I don’t weigh up, I don’t count, I do not compromise! I follow my deep heartbeat”.

The path of my priestly life, which began at the Agarathos

Monastery, did not even have ambition. This is because the genetic characteristic of this Monastery bears indelibly etched the virtues of simplicity, humility, affability, graciousness and kindness. These virtues which detest the vacuum of ambition, stood as a table compass of orientation for me, when unexplored paths brought me to unknown places, either on the shores of the Black Sea, or the Nile regions of Egypt, or the extremes of Africa.

Having passed through forty years of priesthood and pondering over the journey which began here, I think that the only fear I felt was the fear of God. And the only ambition which I allowed myself was to transform my existence into love for God and people. This love, as a steadfast unshakeable foundation, supported my hopes and my expectations, my dreams and anxieties, the insecurity of the ephemeral and the certainty of the resurrection in Christ.

Yet again I knock on the door of my Monastery, the doors of my personal Ithaca, a pious and devout pilgrim brother who never forgot the cradle of his priestly foundation. In this birthplace of my priestly journey, in this fraternal community of love and devotion to God, I place today in perpetual remembrance all that God's mercy generously granted me. The symbols of Patriarchal value and honor. Tiaras, stoles, pastoral staffs, pectoral crosses, medals, honors. Let them all be faint reflections of the unfathomable divine patience which deemed me, the humble Theodoros, worthy to become an operator of the word of our Lord Jesus Christ in the length and breadth of the world. To become a spiritual father and supporter in the struggle of our African fellow human beings who want to align their lives on a steady path to returning to divine beauty.

This testimony of life, does not seek neither the redemption of recognition, nor the interest of awards. This testimony of life symbolically comes only to redeem the priceless duty of my gratitude to the Monastery, which reinforced the conviction

of my faith and strengthened the perseverance of my soul. This testimony of life comes to reverently honour the Monastery which always eased my toil, generously filled my thoughts and generously made the desert of circumstances bloom. This testimony of life comes humbly to give the visitor an example of how one ought to serve, to contribute and to really care about our fellow human beings. This testimony of life reflects unlimited gratitude to the Lord of Life, the "living water", who deemed worthy one of His earthly creations to respond to His call: "Come and draw water". Amen!").