

## **THE DIOCESE OF ELDORET WELCOMES ITS PATRIARCH AND FOUNDER**

**His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa**, paid an historic visit to the heart of the central valley of Kenya, as for the first time in the history of Orthodoxy in the country a Patriarch visited the Eldoret district, the See of the newly-established Diocese of Eldoret. The valley of Kenya's 5th largest district is famous for its farms developed by immigrants from South Africa in 1908, its dense vegetation due to frequent rainfall and its marathon runners, as it is the area that has produced the best long distance runners.

At the Cathedral of St. Nektarios, the Patriarch was officially welcomed by the 50 priests of the Diocese, the Chiefs of the tribes, the local authorities and a large number of believers who hurried to meet their Patriarch and receive his blessing. A Doxology was sung in the Cathedral together with the Artoclasia Service, in an atmosphere of joy and gladness. Addressing the crowd, His Beatitude prayed to God, expressing his gratitude that Saint Nektarios led his steps to Eldoret, especially in this year when the Church celebrates the 100th anniversary of his Dormition.

He referred to the remarkable work done all these years in the area by His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Makarios, a work that bore excellent results so that he considered it necessary to establish an autonomous Diocese so that these good faithful people of the area could have their own Bishop, their own Spiritual Father. The Patriarch also referred to the capability, reverence and genuine Christian ethos that define the flock of the Diocese of Eldoret, which makes them a special family of the Patriarchate and which rightly classifies them in the large family of St. Mark, the Founder and Patron of the Orthodox Church in Africa.

Then the rulers of the region took the floor and thanked their patriarch who visited them in the middle of the pandemic and who listened to their Orthodox hearts and gave them the privilege of having their own Bishop. The women of the Eldoret Orthodox Women's Association then presented a festive program with hymns and songs in honor of the Patriarch. A hierarchical meeting followed where the Patriarch addressed paternal instructions and advice, thanked Father Isaac who is the Elder of the Priests and recommended the Committee that will organize the operation of the Diocese and the reception of its new Bishop.

The Patriarch then went on to visit the model school (all grades) of the parish where he admired the facilities and the high level of services they offer to the student youth. After the tour, he thanked Bishop Neophytos of Nyeri and Mount Kenya, who originates from the region and who since the time of his studies in America took care of the construction and operation of these remarkable schools for which the Patriarchate is very proud.

After the tour, His Beatitude addressed words of love and hope to the children, asking them to fight hard so that when they graduate they can have the tools they need to succeed in life, he asked them to be careful and follow the instructions of the state and their teachers so that the pandemic in the area would be limited and finally asked them to be patient because soon the great scientists with enlightenment of God will save us from the pandemic.

The Patriarch's visit was completed with a pilgrimage to the oldest church in the Seren district, the Parish of the Resurrection of the Lord, where Fr Badias from Uganda began his Missionary expeditions. After the pilgrimage, he visited the Orthodox schools and the great Spiritual Center founded by the current Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and all of Albania, during his time as Exarch in Kenya.

Late in the afternoon, the Patriarch was visited by the two Governors of Kisumu and Eldoret, who had just returned from Nairobi where they had a meeting with the President of Kenya, and conveyed to His Beatitude the greetings and love of the President. The two Governors thanked the Archbishop of Alexandria who visited their areas, for the remarkable and important work offered by the Patriarchate in the area, and assured him that the Local authorities will always be on the side of his Bishops and have informed him that they will soon proceed with the concession of state land for the construction of schools and clinics.

His Beatitude thanked the Governors for their visit, briefed them about his activities during his stay in their areas, thanked them for their help, blessed them for a successful term and asked them to fight for the prosperity of their homeland, emphasizing that the Patriarchate of Alexandria and all Africa fights every day for its flock, shares in their pain and tries to offer its children a better tomorrow, which will come only when the Peace of God reigns in our hearts and the Gospel of the Lord is the A and the Z of our life.