

## **THE EXPATRIATE GREEKS IN SOUTH AFRICA WELCOMED THE PATRIARCH OF ALEXANDRIA**

**On Friday, 12th November 2021, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa,** arrived at the O. R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa, to begin his pastoral visit to the Expatriate Greeks in the country, accompanied by the Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Nicodemus Totkas.

His Beatitude was welcomed at the airport by His Eminence Damaskinos Metropolitan of Johannesburg and Pretoria, the Ambassador of Egypt His Excellency Mr. Ahmed El Fadly, the High Commissioner of Cyprus His Excellency Mr. Antonios Mandritis, the Charge d' Affaires of the Embassy of Greece in Pretoria Honorable Mr. Stefanos Ioannides, the Consul General of Greece Honorable Mr, Ioannis Hatzantonakis and the President of the Hellenic Federation of South Africa, Mr. John Spyrides.

The Patriarch expressed his joy at being back in South Africa after three years, as his visit last year was postponed due to the pandemic. At the same time, he stated his intention, as part of a tour of the Greek communities, to be closely at the side of the Community that was tested by Covid-19. His wish is that South Africa, the African continent, but also the whole world would soon be freed from the harsh scourge of the pandemic.

In the morning of the same day, the Holy Clergy of the Metropolis welcomed His Beatitude the Patriarch to the Holy Chapel of the Holy Trinity and the Evangelist Mark and to the premises of the Holy Metropolis. Afterwards a General meeting of the Clergy was held, during which the Alexandrian Primate paternally addressed the clergy, in teaching and advice in the Lord, supporting them in their Godly ministry.

His Eminence Damaskinos, Metropolitan of Johannesburg and Pretoria tearfully welcomed His Beatitude on behalf of the clergy, emphasizing the importance and blessing of the presence of the Pope and the Patriarch, both for the Metropolis and for all of the Hellenes abroad, especially during this period, in which everyone is tested by the harsh pandemic. Before the Rudder of the Alexandrian Church he thanked all the priests of his Metropolis, for the attitude they have shown throughout the pandemic, standing prayerfully by the flock, while he did not forget to remember those souls who had lost the battle with Covid-19.

Visibly emotional, the Patriarch of Alexandria thanked the local Archbishop Damaskinos and the clergy for the warm welcome, for the support of the work of the Metropolis and the Greek community, as well as their devotion to the institution of the ancient Patriarchate and to the person of the Patriarch.

He praised them for the courage and patience they have shown in the difficult period of the pandemic, as well as for the consolation that the faithful find in the Church. He did not forget to commemorate the souls of the hierarchs of the Alexandrian Throne who are now at rest in the place of the Righteous, leaving behind the irreplaceable vacancy of their absence, during the past one year.

Finally, he referred to the Chief Secretary of the Holy Synod, Archimandrite Nicodemus Totkas. He thanked him for his tireless and unwavering devotion to the person of his Patriarch, as well as for his exemplary filial obedience, both to himself as well as to the local Metropolitan of Johannesburg, leaving the parish in which he served for a 5 – year period, to serve at the centre of the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

Afterwards, His Beatitude attended a lunch given in his honour by the Egyptian Ambassador His Excellency Mr. Ahmed El Fadly, as provided for by diplomatic protocol, since the Alexandrian Primate – based in Alexandria – also holds Egyptian citizenship. The Ambassador warmly welcomed the Patriarch to South Africa and a discussion on issues of common interest followed.

It is worth mentioning that the ambassadors of the Orthodox countries of Cyprus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Georgia and Belarus were invited to the lunch which they honoured with their presence and whom His Beatitude thanked warmly for coming and honouring him.

On the evening of Friday, November 12, concluding the first day of the Patriarchal visit, His Beatitude was warmly welcomed by the President of the Cyprus Brotherhood Mr. Andreas Dimitriou and the members of the Cyprus Brotherhood of South Africa, an association founded in 1934 which is a “beacon” of the rights of Cyprus in South Africa.

Distinguished for his sensitivity towards the Cyprus issue, Patriarch Theodoros of Alexandria, expressed in his speech the support of the Patriarchate in matters of the defense of human rights. Hoping for the application of International Law, he prayed for a speedy solution to the long-standing problem of the illegal occupation of the territories of Cyprus.