

THE ORDINATION OF BISHOP OF KISUMU AND WEST KENYA ATHANASIOS

On Sunday 6th December 2015 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa conducted the ordination of His Grace Athanasios Bishop of Kisumu and West Kenya, at the Holy Patriarchal Church of St Nicholas in Cairo.

On the evening before, he officiated at Great Vespers at the celebrating Patriarchal Church of St Nicholas and then the Great Messages of the recently elected Bishops of Mozambique Chrysostomos, Nieri and Mount Kenya Neofytos and Kisumu and West Kenya Athanasios.

were given in his presence At the Eucharistic gathering on the feast day, as wellas at the ordination of His Grace, His Eminence Elder Metropolitan Gabriel of Leontopolis, Patriarchal Vicar General, His Eminence Makarios Metropolitan of Nairobi, His Eminence AAlexandros Metropolitan of Nigeria, His Eminence Nicholas of Ermopolis, His Eminence Nikodimos of Memphis, Patriarchal Vicar of Cairo, His Eminence Niphon Metropolitan of Pilousion, Abbot of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of ST George in Cairo, His Eminence Metropolitan Ioannis of Zambia, and their Graces Chrysostomos Bishop of Mozambique and Neofytos of Nieri also participated.

Many faithful came to the church for the celebrations from both the Greek and Arabic communities of the Egyptian capital.

In his address, with deep emotion, His Beatitude said:

Your Grace, elected Bishop Athanasios of Kisumu and West Kenya and beloved brother in the Lord,

“My you be strengthened with all power giving thanks to the

father who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light". (Colossians 1:11-12)

The hour of Missionas in the vast and great country of Kenya "has indeed come". The fullness of time has arrived, the time of sowing has come as has the time of reaping. At this sacred moment of your ordination as Bishop, I wish to stand paternally opposite you and in a spirit of love and advice, to weave into your thoughts my expectations and visions for you, my beloved son Fr. Athanasios.

Firstly I want to say to you that the Theology of our church is not only produced through the University desks and the amphitheatres of the Theological Faculties. The Theology of our Church is not a double-headed Theology. It is not academic. It does not begin and end in libraries and University laboratories. The Theology of our Church begins at the Holy Altar! That is the greatest Theological Table which produces the one Theology – the Theology of the Immaculate Lamb. On the Holy Altar is the sacrificial lamb. It is the broken, divided and never expended Christ. He is the centre "of the entire Church". He is the lighting strength, the source of Sanctity, from which all of creation, strengthened both in logic and intellect sends up the eternal doxology.

So our Orthodox faith cannot be made protestant! Because at its centre is Christ. The Crucified Christ! The Risen Christ! The One who Ascended in glory from us to the Heavens and the eternal – the One who is always with us. This is the faith of the Orthodox, the faith of our Fathers! It is a faith that cannot be privatised. It is a faith that is not recorded in the margins of a private agreement or a notarial act!

The Church Contract is the Cross of the Lord and His signature is His blood! Ad now that I have briefly told you what the Orthodox Theology and our faith are, I will tell you about its Missionarypaths! The Mission which in latter years has also become known as Missionary Work, is in our Church's DNA. It is

in its nature. It is its natural path. It is the life of its Life.

With careful yet powerful steps it moves to those outside, to meeting with others, those who are of other faiths, who are different, strangers, aliens, in order to make them brothers of Christ. Not a fan! Not to make him his personal property! Not an applauder! Rather a brother and friend of Christ, of the eternal friend of the young, as well as of people of every age. Most specifically, Missionary Work in the land of the Kenyans, has today more than ever become a weighty matter. The first fruits have flourished!

The first foundations have been created and the first basics for Evangelization of souls which hunger for a selfless and genuine Orthodoxy, have also been created. This is what you need to order and to teach, not only with your words, but in your manner and ethos of life. Missionary work is not advertised through photographs and electronic media. This is not always Missionary work. You do Missionary work with the beating of your heart when it is hurting with those who hurt. When it rejoices "with those who rejoice and cries with those who cry". When you are kneading the leaven of faith and you make it an offering of love with the Cross and Death, dying and rising every day, every hour, every minute.

My brother, Fr Athanasios, At this sacred hour, keep my heartfelt and paternal words in your heart. And proceed with obedience in the will of the Lord. With obedience to the Alexandrian Throne and its Primate who called you. Here from the Patriarchal See I will follow with love and interest the steps you take and your Apostolic efforts. Our extensive references to your Patriarch must always be your primary concern. The Diocese awarded to you is not foreign to you. You are flesh of the flesh of our Kenyan brothers. Love them even more as Bishop and Father.

Teach them to love Christ's name above all. Teach them about

the Evangelist Mark. Make them feel that they are the children of a glorious Patriarchate, of Alexandria and of All Africa, which is fully aware of the meaning of Love. For centuries it has been toiling to make this love a way of existence and life. In your personal Pentecost, the day of your ordination as Bishop, together with all the love of those of us who came to rejoice with you, invisibly present are also the entire choir of the Saints of our Church of Alexandria, our great Hierarchs and Ecumenical Teachers, and the Venerable Abbas of the Desert of the Thebaid. Particularly present, is Saint Nicholas who celebrates his feast day today and St Nektarios of Pentapolis who at this same Holy Altar was ordained Hierarch.

I pray that the Most Merciful God will grant to your Hierarchal journey, the forbearance, wisdom and merciful heart of these saintly Hierarchs, the simplicity, the patience and meekness of our Holy Abbas. Please know that my paternal love will always be with you, next to you, as well as the love and prayer of the Holy Hierarchs who elected you, at every step of your hierarchal journey. In this world that is becoming steadily more inhuman, become a preacher of hope in the Merciful God. As Christians we have the privilege of being happy people. Our Lord Himself, immediately after His Resurrection, said as His first word "rejoice". The sad and desperate person is the most unfair to God. As Missionaries we have a duty to proceed with joy where there is no path, because we open out the way as we proceed, inspiring in our brothers and sisters that God brings solutions where human logic and inability stops.

Only in this manner will we reveal the genuine human face, which is never predictable. In ascertaining the difference, we should not be afraid, but should rejoice in the potential of finding a meeting point with someone else, someone different, on many levels, because in the spiritual world there is no monotony and no boredom. And unity in Christ is not afraid of

diversity, rather it gives it meaning and enriches it. It is this inspiration that contemporary man needs and this is the greatest contribution which our Church makes to the hard reality of our times.

My brother Athanasios, Go in peace! "And doing this you will save yourself and those who hear you"! Much strength to the enormous Ministry of your Hierarchy.