

A GRADUATION CEREMONY WAS HELD AT THE "ST ATHANASIOS" PATRIARCHAL ACADEMY OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, officiated on the Sunday of the Blind Man, 6th June 2021, at the Divine Liturgy at the Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas the Sanctified.

After the end of the Divine Liturgy, in a joyful, but also very moving atmosphere, a wonderful graduation ceremony took place in the Throne Room of the Holy Monastery.

The diplomas were awarded to the graduates by the Theodoros II, Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, in the presence of the Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria His Eminence Narcissus of Naucratis and the Principal His Grace Germanos, Bishop of Tamiathus.

Also honouring the ceremony with their presence were the Consul General of Greece in Alexandria, Mr. Athanasios Kotsionis with his wife, the General Secretary of HCA Mr. Dimitris Kavouras and the President of the Lyceum of Greek Women of Alexandria Mrs. Aliki Antoniou.

Starting the graduation ceremony, the Principal His Grace Germanos, Bishop of Tamiathus, thanked the Patriarch for his continuous and unceasing care for the school, but also for the fact that he is ready for any sacrifice for the African continent.

He then referred to the words of the Apostle Paul: "He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully", "so also you, Your Beatitude, sow the blessing and the eternal values that spring from the teaching of Christ, into the souls of men."

You support, he stressed, the souls of these young guardians of our church, who possess faith and love for the living and true God and with you the students experience all the greatness of faith which is engraved indelibly in their souls.

In conclusion, he asked the Patriarch to give his blessing to the graduates to accompany them to their countries, to which they will convey the word of God.

On behalf of the seminarians, thanks were addressed by George Kabongo Mutela Steve from the Congo, emphasizing that, "Your Beatitude, today is not like any other, but it is special, which we will always remember with nostalgia. The years we spent at the Patriarchal Academy were full of learning and strong emotions, staying united and in solidarity".

The seminarians, as a sign of gratitude, first of all thanked His Beatitude the Patriarch, for his infinite love, his great blessing, his personal participation, in their economic, social and spiritual support.

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria then took the floor and with deep emotion said:

"Today, my children, during this beautiful Resurrection Sunday Divine Liturgy, time has come for you to receive your Diplomas. My Bishop, Theodoros, once said that degrees do not make you an expert, but also without a degree you are not an expert. So you my children today, will take in your blessed hands a piece of paper, which as you read it will begin with the blessed words: "Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa" and your heart will turn back, with tears and memories, here to our Center, in Alexandria and to our Monastery where all these years you

studied at the feet of our Holy Father Savvas the Sanctified”.

With particular emotion, His Beatitude referred to his election as Primate of the Alexandrian Church, emphasizing that, "coming to St Savvas, my dream was always to have our own Academy, to bring out our staff. My children, I loved and love Africa. The historical title of the Patriarch of Alexandria is always accompanied by the word "Africa". "Africa is the future and it is the most valuable thing we have to show as a Patriarchate".

"Today, my children, I greet you and I want to wish you good progress. I would not like to ask anything from your loving heart. I want you only to listen to a voice. Do not forget our Patriarchate, the church of St Mark, this warm embrace that you have felt all these years here in our Monastery and give this embrace to the people who will approach you ".

"Open the door of your embrace, my children. You have the blessing of God. Receive the true light today that our Lord gave to this poor unknown man, who was blind from birth. A despised man who, with all his longing, preached, this is my Lord and my God", said the Patriarch and continued:

"The future for our church is your homeland. Many times I refer to the lyrics, this soil is yours and ours. This soil is your homeland. These soils of Africa gave birth to you and these people are waiting for help from your hands, light from your eyes, good and wise words from your mouth and we from here will wait to hear your good news and then we will kneel before St Savvas and we will say, glory be to God, our efforts were not wasted, because nothing is lost in this life ".

In closing, the Patriarch wished the seminarians good progress and added, "I want to wish you good progress my children. Always remember that the center of our Church is Alexandria, St Savvas the Sanctified is your Monastery, here where you lived the most beautiful moments and when the difficult times come, remember that our grandfather St Savvas, together with St Mark, with St Nectarios and St Catherine the Bride of Christ, will protect you ".

His Beatitude, addressing the Consul General of Greece in Alexandria, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to Greece and especially to the Ministry of Education and the General Secretariat of Religions, for their support and the provision of teachers, so that the Academy can function properly and impart knowledge to students.

In a very cordial and paternal speech, the Patriarch addressed warm thanks to the Patriarchal Vicar of Alexandria, His Eminence Narcissus of Naucratis telling him that "you love the church, you love our Monastery, but above all, you loved the Academy of St Athanasios. As Patriarchal Vicar and co-Cyrenean of my Struggle, if we open your heart, in a large part of it we will see the Academy. Dear Narcissus, thank you for always being both father and brother".

To His Grace Germanos, Bishop of Tamiathus, His Beatitude said characteristically: "To you, Holy one of God Germanos of Tamiathus, I thank you, you were like a loving Father to our children, always smiling, you taught them decency, to respect the sanctuary and that the Holy Altar is the Holy of Holies. Together with Elder Paul, we thank you, because you taught our children to honor their person, to honor their homeland, to honor what they were taught and we thank you ".

His Beatitude, after thanking all the clergy, namely Fr. Petros, the Chief Secretary Fr. Nikodimos and Fr. Elpidoforos, did not fail to thank the remarkable teachers, Mr. George Tsitsipinis and Mr. Panagiotis Gazis, emphasizing that, from excess of their time and heart they assist these children .

At the same time, the Patriarch thanked the Hellenic Community of Alexandria and the President of the Lyceum of Greek Women of Alexandria, for their support, love and contribution to the School and to all students, so that they do not want for anything.

Finally, the Primate of Alexandria, made special mention of the Brotherhood of Orthodox Foreign Mission of Thessaloniki and, specifically referring to the President Mr. Charalambos Metallidis and the Vice President Mr. Nosti Psarras, said: I wanted to thank you together with the Board of Directors for your valuable offer. Behold, the children that God has given us. Thank you for your help, which was not lost. May you always be blessed and know that they are the workers of tomorrow's gospel of our Lord ".

The ceremony ended with songs and hymns in the courtyard of the Holy Monastery.