

Alexandrian Patriarch: “The heart of Missions beats here in Kenya”

On the **18th August 2018**, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, continuing his missionary visit to Kenya, served the Liturgy at the Holy Church of St Makarios, within the Patriarchal Academy, concelebrating with the Elder Metropolitan Makarios of Nairobi, the Bishops Neophytos of Nieri and Mount Kenya and Athanasios of Kisumu and West Kenya, and many other priests and deacons. The choir of the Patriarchal Academy chanted in Swahili, English and Greek.

The church was filled with friends and family of the seventeen graduating Seminarians, coming from Kenya, as well as Burundi, Rwanda, Madagascar and Zambia. Also present were the Ambassadors of Greece, Serbia, Russia, Egypt and the Pope's Nuncio.

At the end, His Eminence Makarios welcomed His Beatitude and said how historic the day was with his presence, showing in this way the feelings of love and appreciation to the work being done at the Patriarchal Academy.

With great emotion His Beatitude expressed his deep content and his gratitude for the promotion and consolidation of the Orthodox faith through the work of the Patriarchal Academy throughout the continent of Africa.

Both stressed the leading role played by the founder of the School, the late Archbishop Makarios III.

His Beatitude once again reiterated that ‘the heart of missions beats here in Kenya.’ Breakfast was then served for everyone. Then in procession, everyone, with the accompaniment of the Police Philharmonic, arrived at the adjacent magnificent Church of Hagia Sophia, where the official graduation ceremony took place, in a climate of deep emotion, with the presence of foreign ambassadors and a crowd of people. A rich festal programme of hymns and songs from various choirs was presented.

His Beatitude Patriarch Theodoros addressed paternal words of praise to the graduates, handing over not only their diplomas, but a blessing to each and a small gift for the beginning of their new life. Prizes were also awarded to students who excelled.

His Eminence Makarios thanked His Beatitude who for the third time was present at the graduation of the seminarians of the Patriarchal Academy. Addressing the graduates, he called on them to follow the example of the twelve disciples of the Lord: as He chose them and they became the chosen and continuous preachers of the Gospel, so should they, from this day undertake this precious and enormous work of the Gospel for the Patriarchate of Alexandria throughout the African Continent. He asked them to use their academic knowledge with wisdom, discretion and obedience, but above all to live and act according to the example of Christ, without ignoring the dynamic and beneficial energy of Divine Liturgy. He also thanked the lecturers of the Patriarchal Academy for their dedication and the zeal which they show to correctly and effectively educate the new workers of the Gospel.

He entire ceremony concluded with an improvised prayer by the Exarch of the Patriarchate of Alexandria in Cyprus, Archimandrite Athenodoros. A rich meal followed for the dignitaries and all present.

On the following morning, **19th August**, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, with his concelebrants His Eminence

Metropolitan Makarios of Nairobi, Their Graces Bishop Neophytos of Nieri and Mount Kenya and Athanasios Bishop of Kisumu and West Kenya, celebrated a festive Divine Liturgy at the Church of St Eleftherios in the village of Rironi – in Nairobi. Many Priest from Kenya participated in the Divine Liturgy and faithful Christians were present from the surrounding parishes.

The official welcome took place on the main road headed by the Police Philharmonic, the clergy and the faithful people of God. A procession was formed that culminated in the Church, where they waited to receive the Beatitude 'with palms and branches'. So much was the enthusiasm, joy and gladness of the people, since most of them were seeing the Head of the Second-Throne Patriarchate for the first time. The whole reception was reminiscent of the 'Hosanna, Blessed is He that comes..."

The Divine Liturgy was performed in a mystical and deep spiritually pious environment, with the participation of the many people of God and the priests, who together with the congregation chanted matins and the Divine Liturgy melodiously.

During the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude deeply moved by the great participation of so many with faith and enthusiasm, addressed paternal and supportive words to them, stressing the importance of Orthodoxy on the continent of Africa, with the dynamic presence and under the canonical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa, from the time of its founder, the Apostle and Evangelist Mark, from where the Church continues its Apostolic Tradition.

Prior to the Divine Liturgy His Beatitude consecrated as Archimandrite Fr Marcos, one of the oldest collaborators of the Church of Kenya.

In a festive atmosphere, the pious people of God, together with the Patriarch, the Bishops and the priests, as is custom in Africa, sang and danced beautiful traditional and Christian hymns. Following the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude spoke to the mass media, expressing his joy and satisfaction for being in Kenya for the umpteenth time, the most dynamic mission of our Church, praying that the President and the political parties will work for peace and unity in the country.

A festive programme then followed with children from various parishes and a rich traditional lunch.