

BURUNDI ACCEPTS ORTHODOXY

The missionary visit of the Alexandrian Primate to the Republic of Burundi and to the Holy Metropolis of Burundi and Rwanda continues on the second and third day.

On the morning of Tuesday, 28th November 2023, in an atmosphere of joy and excitement, the official Doxology and reception of His Beatitude Theodoros was sung at the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Blessed Theotokos in Bujumbura, in the presence of Their Eminences the Metropolitan Innocent of Burundi and Rwanda, Daniel of Aksum and His Grace Sylvester Bishop of Jinja and Eastern Uganda.

After the warm reception by the Holy Clergy and the Orthodox believers, a procession was formed which led into the Cathedral. After the official Doxology, His Eminence Innocent Metropolitan of Burundi and Rwanda in his address, expressed the great joy of everyone for the visit of His Beatitude. He thanked the Honorary Consul of Greece and the President of the Hellenic Community of Bujumbura, the clergy and the people for the warm reception of the spiritual father of the Orthodox faithful of Africa. Characteristically he said: *"Today the Orthodox Church of Burundi exults, today our Holy Metropolis rejoices, today the Hellenic Community is delighted, today the faithful Orthodox people glorify our Holy God on the arrival of His Beatitude, the successor of the Evangelist Mark, our Father and Shepherd."*

Primate Theodoros in his reply thanked His Excellency the President of the Republic of Burundi Mr. Évariste Ndayishimiye for the warm welcome, Their Eminences the Metropolitan, the officials and all the believers present saying that he came to meet and strengthen his spiritual children, clergy and people, but also to take strength from them himself.

"Egypt, from which we come, is the crown of Africa, and the blessed country of Burundi, is the precious jewel of Central Africa! As a member of the East African Community, the wonderful people of this country, through the difficulties and trials of the past years, stand proud and dignified in Africa, teaching the values of love and patience, principal virtues of Christianity, which is embraced by the majority. We pray to the Lord for the progress and well-being of the people and we look forward to the further consolidation of the Orthodox faith in the country", emphasized His Beatitude.

Immediately after, the Patriarch headed to the adjacent buildings of the new Diocese, the administrative center of the mission and the Offices of the Holy Metropolis, where he performed the service of the Lesser Sanctification and the Inauguration, expressing his joy for the realization of the present important work for the Local Church, through the decisive contribution of the Hellenic Community of Bujumbura.

Afterwards, the Patriarch visited the Offices of the Hellenic Community of Bujumbura, where he had a meeting with the Honorary Consul of Greece Mr. Georgios Koukoulis and members of the Hellenic Community.

Finally, on the evening of the same day, he attended the reception given in his honor by His Excellency Mr. Yasser Elatawi, the Ambassador of Egypt to Burundi.

On Wednesday, 29th November, the Alexandrian Primate traveled outside the city, visiting the Gihanga Community where, in the village of Gihunge, he celebrated the Consecration of the Holy Church of Saints Athanasios the Great and John the Theologian which is under completion. All the faithful enthusiastically welcomed the Patriarch, participating in the Holy Service. Also, His Beatitude the Patriarch

announced the creation of a school and a clinic, to cover the educational and medical needs of the Community.

The Patriarch expressed the deepest gratitude of the Alexandrian Church to His Holiness Daniel, the Patriarch of Romania who, through the. Priests Fr. Daniel and Fr. Viktor, helps the missionary Holy Diocese of Burundi and His Eminence Innocent.

In the afternoon, His Beatitude was interviewed by the Mass Media of the country, television and radio, in which he briefed the people on the presence of the ancient Orthodox Church in their country and its activities in Burundi. He also officiated during the service of Great Vespers for the feast days of St Andrew the First-called and St Frumentius of Aksum (Ethiopia) at the Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos.