

CELEBRATORY MEETING OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE ROMANIAN PATRIARCHATE IN HONOUR OF HIS BEATITUDE

On 28th October 2011, a festive meeting of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Patriarchate was convened at the Patriarchal Mansion in Bucharest, due to the official pilgrimage of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to Romania.

The meeting was declared open by His Beatitude Daniel Patriarch of Romania, who, during his address, emphasized the importance of His Beatitude's visit, describing it as a spiritual second baptism for the centuries old fraternal bonds between the two churches. Also he once again praised the contribution of the ancient patriarchal Throne of Alexandria to the safeguarding and support of the Orthodox faith of the Romanian people in critical moments on its historical course. During his reply, His Beatitude Theodoros II, mentioned:

"Your Beatitude Patriarch Daniel of Romania, Your Eminences, Holy Hierarchs, rejoice in the Lord always".

With great joy and emotion we meet with you today in this festive gathering of the Holy Synod of the Church of Romania and in your honoured figures we meet in our imaginations all the members of the Romanian Hierarchy, exchanging with you the kiss of peace and love in Jesus Christ.

We are here among you together with our entourage, from the Holy See of the Apostle Mark, bearing the blessing of the Evangelist, the venerable ascetics, the sanctified monastics and the Great Fathers and theologians of well-known Alexandria. We came to meet honoured and beloved people, with whom common faith, "the common cup", the common hope of salvation and at the end, that one and only Person of our Lord Jesus Christ who Suffered, was Crucified, was Buried and Rose again, unites us".

On the 9th October we completed 7 years from our undertaking by the Grace of God of the steering of the ancient Church of Alexandria. Seven years of struggles, hard work as well as blessings from the All Compassionate God, who acts and reveals Himself in a mystical manner to the pious African hearts which seek the Truth and the Holy Light to illuminate their lives.

Seven years of Missionary journeys on the vast African continent, the continent of the future, in order for our brothers and sisters to be spiritually organised and to have the many life problems which they face, eased. Our responsibility is great. And this is because, taking on our shoulders the very heavy Apostolic and Patristic heritage of the Enlightener of our ancient Church and of his great spiritual successors and our predecessors, we are called on to preach "Christ Crucified and Risen" to the diverse and complex world of the tribes, without discrediting their cultural peculiarities, their dialects and their traditions.

At the same time we are called upon to shepherd the thousands of our Orthodox brothers and sisters, who live in Africa, but who do not come from there. The Greek, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, and other societies and communities flourish and are active within the jurisdiction of our Patriarchal Throne. We rejoice especially on the progress of all our spiritual children without exception, for whom we are pastorally concerned, respecting their ethnic temperament. For this reason also, the priests who are sent by the Patriarchates of their countries of origin, with our permission and consent, execute their pastoral and liturgical duties under the

omophorion of the local Hierarchy of the Alexandrian Church, in their language and according to their Liturgical and other traditions.

Your Beatitude, Your Eminences,

We are here with you, following your brotherly invitation, in order to participate in the Liturgical and spiritual functions for the holy memory of St Dimitrios the New, Patron Saint of Bucharest and to receive his blessing, aligning at the same time to the old ethos of one to another society and of the spiritual revitalisation of fraternal and centuries old relations between our Patriarchate with the Church of Romania.

As we mentioned yesterday during the Patriarchal con-celebration, relations of co-operation and reciprocity between our Churches date back to the end of the 16th century and are established by two Holy Patriarchs of Alexandria, Meletios Pegas and Kyrillos Loukaris. Since then indissoluble bonds were forged through the ages, which offered mutual support through critical crossroads of the ecclesiastical history of both our Churches.

This responsibility of the continuation of the blessed journey together and of brotherly love, the infinite mercy of God entrusted to the shoulders of all of us on both sides, making us responsible to ecclesiastical history. We have as a common obligation the preservation, safeguarding and spreading to the future generations of all that is holy and venerable that we received from our Predecessors, of everything that the Holy Fathers who came before us instituted unaltered and entrusted to us via the unchanged Holy Canons, holy texts, holy traditions and prophecies. And we all have a very deep consciousness that we are all watch-guards of this enormous spiritual wealth, "not adding or subtracting", according to our Arch-priestly Avowal, respecting and honouring ourselves and each other.

It is under these presuppositions, then, that we meet today at this festive and honourable convening of the Holy Synod, through which yet again the Synodal system of administration of the Eastern Orthodox Church is manifest, within the canonical jurisdictions of the local Autocephalous Churches, whose geographical bounds we ought to respect entirely, and whose spiritual labours and struggles we ought to concur with in brotherly love.

Therefore, rejoicing in the "breath of the gentle breeze" which blows among us at this moment, we embrace and kiss "with a brotherly and holy kiss" each one of our brothers separately. You are always with us in every one of our humble petition "for the holy Churches of God...". Also in every one of our difficult circumstance, whether we face this in the suffering Middle East of today and in North Africa, or in the impenetrable tropical forests, or in the arid dryness of the African savanna and the abrasive desert, your prayers "silently uttered", strengthen us, so that we can continue our humble journey, which is none other than the continual sowing of the Gospel word in Africa, together with the contemporary Missionaries, Hierarchs, Priests, Deacons, Monastics and the rest of the people of our Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne.

We ask that you pray for the success of our difficult struggle, as we pray fervently for the "stability of the Holy Church of God in Romania, which rightly defines the word of His truth". The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen!"

He then awarded the Supreme Order of the Throne of ST Mark with a Star to His Beatitude the Romanian Patriarch.

Following the hosting of an official lunch at the Patriarchal Mansion, the two

Primates and their entourages, with the Holy Relics of the Apostle Andrew, which is accompanied to Romania by His Eminence Chrysostomos Metropolitan of Patras, boarded a military aircraft and travelled to the city of Sibiu, where on the 29th October they will perform the Liturgical and spiritual functions of the sanctification of the late Metropolitan Andrei Saguna of Transylvania.

At the city's airport an official welcome took place by His Eminence the Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Transylvania, Laurentius, His Excellency the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, the Secretary General of Religions of the Romanian Government and other dignitaries. A Doxology was then sung at the Holy Cathedral of Sibiu and an official dinner was hosted by His Eminence Laurentius at the Metropolitan Mansion in honour of the Venerable Primates.