

ENTHRONEMENT OF HIS EMINENCE GENNADIOS BISHOP OF BOTSWANA

The Enthronement Ceremony of His Eminence Gennadios, Bishop of Botswana took place on the morning of Saturday 2nd June 2012, by His Holiness Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa in the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Gaborone.

His Beatitude was accompanied by His Eminence Makarios Archbishop of Kenya, and Metropolitan George of Accra. Also present at the ceremony among others were the Minister of Health of Botswana representing His Excellency the President of the Country, the Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations of Botswana, the Honorary Consul of Botswana in Athens Mr Nektarios Polychroniou, the Ambassadors of Greece, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Japan, the Consul of Israel, the High Commissioners of South Africa and Uganda, the Euro-parliamentarian from Cyprus Dr Eleni Theocharous, the First Secretary of the Permanent Representative of the European Union in the United Nations in Geneva, the Mufti (Moulana) of the Muslim Community of Botswana with his Secretary, His Grace the Anglican Bishop of Botswana, His Grace the Roman Catholic Bishop of Gaborone, Clergy and many lay people, from Greece, Crete, Cyprus, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Europe. The children of the Greek and Catechetical School made a huge impression on the congregation as they headed the procession at the ceremony. A 25 member choir from the Cathedral and a Byzantine choir from South Africa sang the hymns of the Enthronement ceremony as well as hymns of Pentecost.

In his address His Holiness the Patriarch of Alexandria passed on to His Eminence Gennadios the wishes and prayers of His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Vartholomaios, who sent a Patriarchal Letter to His Holiness for the occasion of the Enthronement of His Eminence Gennadios. In his address, also, the Patriarch said:

“Your Eminence Gennadios, Bishop of Botswana, dear brother and concelebrant,

A joyful and important event for the local Orthodox Church of Botswana has led our steps to this beautiful and blessed country.

Today, by the Grace of the All Holy, Life-giving and Officiating Spirit, you are officially being installed as the first Bishop of the newly-established (in the year 2010), Holy Diocese of Botswana of our Apostolic and Patriarchal Throne of St Mark. Today the Church of Alexandria calls on you to shoulder work and responsibility that is holy and as the shepherd in charge not only to lead, but firstly to firmly establish and excellently organize this newly-established Diocese.

St Paul says *“If a man desire the office of Bishop, he desires a good work”* (1 Timothy 3:1) and I am sure that you will do this, because wherever the Church appointed you, you worked honourably, with faith and dedication.

From the moment that, by the Grace of God we were elevated to the glorious Patriarchal Throne of Alexandria, you stood ever-willingly beside us. You productively maintained the responsibility of Chief Secretariat of the Holy Synod of our Patriarchate and contributed in every way to its complex and arduous work.

You were often given paternal counsel and observations from your Patriarch. You accepted them, you appraised them and you implemented them in your life. You were tested and proved that you are endowed with abilities and organization.

These abilities of yours were recognized also by our Holy Synod and, following our proposal and having as their criterion the filling of the conceivable ship of Christ in Botswana, they elected you to *"lead the Church of the Lord God which He has purchased with His own Blood"* (Acts 20:28-29).

Your Eminence and holy brother,

You have the ability to distinguish yourself as a good Bishop and Hierarch of the Alexandrian Church. You are capable of nurturing in the best manner possible every receptive soul. You are able to stand equal to the noble expectations of this Ancient Church which gave rise to Saints. A Bishop has to be a treasury of all virtues, as St Isidore of Pileusion says.

However the undertaking of the expression of the catechetical word is a laborious effort, the work of the administrative care is difficult, liturgical duties are noble. Pastoral responsibility is a lifelong labour and concern. It is not a journey of relaxation and surety, but a constant and sacrificial offer of love.

You have to give water to the thirsty, feed the impoverished, comfort the sad, support the orphans, visit the sick and those in prison. In short, you need to give yourself every moment wherever the needs of your flock call you, because *"the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep"* (John 10:11).

During the discharge of your holy duties, you will also encounter many obstacles. The service of a Bishop involves also a passage through rough, narrow and uphill paths, which are not strewn with laurel leaves and flowers, but with evil thorns which will often hurt you.

But have faith and confidence in the Arch Shepherd Christ, who sacrificed Himself for mankind. Treasure in your heart His eternal words: *"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my word, they will keep yours also"* (John 15:20).

Do not forget that the Alexandrian Church has the enormous privilege and the serious responsibility to pastorally serve Africa, the continent of the future. Do not forget that there are brothers and sisters here too that have spiritual and vital needs. You are the one who will need to support our African brothers and sisters and to comfort them in their anxieties. You are the one, who, according to the words of St Gregory Nazianzus, will *"take hold of the world and give it to God and make man God-like"*.

You can do so much and the ancient Patriarchate has many expectations of you. Your Father and Patriarch who ordained you to the rank of Bishop will always be by your side. With paternal understanding he will listen carefully to your problems and your anxieties. With tender love he will share your hopes and your visions. The only condition is that you put your hand to the plough and to work honourably in this spiritual field, which the right hand of the Lord gave you, so that you can be shown to be *"an olive tree full of fruit which bears the fruit of justice"*.

This spiritual field is in the progress-loving and well-organized country of Botswana. Many call this country *"the Switzerland of Africa"*, as constant peace, political stability and economic development define this country and by extension diversify the nature of the pastoral needs and the manner in which they are satisfied.

Maintain as an unwavering indicator on your path, the spiritual and social progress of the noble people of the country, the indigenous people, the Greek and

Slav brothers and sisters of your flock. In this effort you will have as supporters the state and other Officials of Botswana, to whom we express warm gratitude. Grateful thanks also are expressed to their Eminences the Hierarchs of the other Christian doctrines for their brotherly understanding and we hope that the collaboration with them in a spirit of love, sincerity and mutual respect will be productive in virtues for the noble people of Botswana.

Your Eminence, Bishop of Botswana,

All of us today with one voice without distinction, pray that the All Merciful God will give you Grace and we will be gladdened when learning of the virtuous results of your efforts towards the organization of your flock.

Walk with courage and faith in God. Continue the spiritual heritage of Jesus. Become an imitator of Christ, both in the spread of the Gospel message of love as well as in the gift of sacrificial service "and the God of peace be with you".

In his reply, His Eminence said: We began with our few collaborators and friends, to find suitable premises, which would be our See, our base of operations, from where we could fulfil our holy responsibility and our ecclesiastical mission. So, in a relatively short time, and with your personal concern and all the necessary actions from the part of the Holy Centre, we obtained the first property which we transformed into a Bishopric and from where today we operate the Offices of the Secretariat, the Registry, the Press and Missionary activity offices and the Directorate of Humanistic, Medical and Educational Programmes, for which we are optimistic we can begin to implement, always under the guidance of and co-operation with the relative State Authorities of our Country.

He continued, saying: However the securing of the plot and the immediate building of our Cathedral, the great wager, the dream of many years is now a reality. A real fact. Again through your efforts we obtained a plot and we have already signed the relative deeds of sale. So, following your blessings of yesterday, the plot is waiting for us to build the Church, which is something that will begin soon. The Committee in charge has already received the necessary direction and all is ready for the foundation to be laid, once the Legal procedures of obtaining the permits from the local Authorities has been completed. At this point I extend my gratitude to Presvytera Androula Papevelthontos from Paralimni in Cyprus and all her family, for the enormous donation towards the purchase of the plot. May the memory of the late Priest Father Evelthon be eternal!

At this moment my thoughts turn to my dear brothers of the Patriarchal entourage, at the Holy Centre, the Holy See of the Alexandrian Throne, with whom for almost 7 years I had impeccable cooperation, our only rule being the progress of the well-intended interests of the Throne, I am grateful to them and embrace them at this holy hour with love and a heartfelt greeting.

Dr Gordana Cavric, who night and day as a "Good Samaritan" offers her valuable medical services always with a smile and warmth, unselfishly with kindness and trust – both to her and her husband, Dr Branko Cavric, Consul of the Czech Republic in Botswana my gratitude. In conclusion, the two angels in my life, (Your Holiness, you know well what "parent" means, mother and father, you have always taught us through the love and appreciation that you show to your mother, a venerable lady, may we have her prayer today, and I am an eye witness to this love you have for your mother Cleopatra). My parents George and Anna, who with the wings of their love continue to protect me daily and their sacrificial presence as well as their prayers which have accompanied my every step, throughout my journey as a Hierarch; and naturally my brothers with their wives, for everything that they offer me

through their love.

There are probably many whom at this point I have forgotten, known and anonymous, but over and above limited human abilities they are certainly remembered and known by God, from whom they will receive their "just reward". I ask that they forgive me!

Addresses were also made by the representative of His Excellency the President, His Grace the Bishop of the Anglican Church and His Excellency the Ambassador of Greece in South Africa. His Holiness then went on to consecrate the Very Reverend Father Sergios, Priest of the Diocese, as Archimandrite.

At the end of the ceremony His Holiness gave the Minister of Health of Botswana, who is also a Priest, as well as to His Grace the Anglican Bishop each a gold pectoral Cross. After the Enthronement ceremony His Holiness left by air for Johannesburg, accompanied by His Excellency the Minister of Health, Metropolitan George of Accra, Consul Nektarios Polychroniou, the Ambassador of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Director of Protocol, the Director of the Presidential Office of the Republic and others.