

FEAST OF THE HOLY GLORIOUS HIEROMARTYR KYRILLOS LOUKARIS IN ALEXANDRIA

On 27th June 2013, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa officiated at Orthros and the Divine Liturgy at the Holy Chapel of St Mark the Apostle and Nektarios of Pentapolis, adjacent to the Patriarchal Church of St Savvas the Sanctified in Alexandria, for the memory of St Kyrillos III, Loukaris, Patriarch of Alexandria (1601-1620) and then Ecumenical Patriarch.

St Kyrillos was born in Handaka (Heraklion) Crete in 1572, tonsured a monk at the Holy Monastery of Angarthos and was an excellent student in Venice and Padova. When aged thirty he was elected Patriarch of Alexandria, succeeding Meletios Pegas, he had already made significant progress in the support of Orthodoxy against the proselytizing activities of the Jesuits in the East.

As Patriarch of Alexandria he put through many renovation works, collected money through fund raising in Orthodox countries for the payment of the Patriarchate's debts, established and renovated churches, attended to those suffering and solved the problems of the Churches in Sinai and Cyprus, where he traveled personally. With the help of the subsequent Patriarch Gerasimos Spartaliotes, he dealt with the problems caused by the epidemic of 1616 and the persecutions by the Turks.

In 1660 Patriarch Timothy II of Constantinople passed away and the Synod elected as Ecumenical Patriarch "Kyrillos, famous for his virtue and wisdom". Loukaris was deposed five times from the Ecumenical Throne and returned. In 1627 he bought a printing shop, where, with the aim of illuminating the Nation useful didactic texts, as well as anti-papal articles were published, a fact that intensifies the envy and hatred. Janissaries destroyed the printing shop and the Patriarch was saved through the intervention of the Belgian Ambassador, who hid him at his home.

In 1637 the Jesuits, who could not tolerate him, defamed Kyrillos to the Sultan, saying that he aroused the Hellenes. He was arrested and imprisoned at the Laimokopio Fortress, where he was strangled on 27 June 1638. His corpse was thrown into the sea and was found by fishermen who buried it in Nikomedia.

K. Paparigopoulos in his "History of the Hellenic Nation" wrote: "Perhaps the office of Ecumenical Patriarch was never brighter than it was during the almost twelve years of interrupted Patriarchal tenure of Kyrillos Loukaris". Indeed Loukaris attempted in every way to elevate the Hellenes. In his activities we note the tendency of Hellenism to communicate with the West. Just as Pegas did, Loukaris preached in the demotic language. He even wrote the prologue for the New Testament by Maximos Kallipolitis in the popular language, emphasizing the importance of the translation of the Gospels for the illumination of the faithful.

Four centuries later, His Beatitude Theodoros II, Patriarch of Alexandria, the fourth brother of the Monastery of Angarathos elected as Primate of the Alexandrian Church (Sylvester 1569-1590, Meletios I Pegas 1590-1601, Kyrillos III Loukaris 1601-1621 and Theodoros II 2004 -) in Synod proceeded with the sanctification of his Holy Martyr Predecessor, bringing to Alexandria fragments of the holy relics of St Kyrillos kept at the Monastery of Angarathos. The canticle service of St Kyrillos was composed by the literary hymnographer Kyrillos, Metropolitan of Rhodes and was published by the Patriarchate of Alexandria in 2010.