

## **HIS BEATITUDE ARRIVES IN BURUNDI**

On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013 His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, having completed his pastoral visit to the Holy Metropolis of Irinopolis in Tanzania, arrived after midnight in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi and see of the Holy diocese of Burundi and Rwanda for his first missionary visit to this country, accompanied by the Very Reverend Archimandrite Meletios Koumanis, Hegumen of the Holy Patriarchal Monastery of St Savvas in Alexandria.

His Beatitude was welcomed at the airport in Bujumbura by His Grace Innokentios Bishop of Burundi and Rwanda, the Deputy Head of the Egyptian Embassy Mr. Ahmed Ismail El Mahs, the Government Director of Protocol Mr. Butoyi, the Honorary Consul of Greece Mr. George Koukoulis and the Clergy of the Diocese.

The next day, 23<sup>rd</sup> February and first day of the pastoral visit, His Beatitude the Alexandrian Primate was received by the Deputy President of the Government of Burundi Mr. Rufyikiri Gervais as His Excellency the President was overseas.

At this meeting His Beatitude expressed his joy on visiting Burundi for the first time and spoke of the imminent enthronement of the new Bishop, His Grace Innokentios, which will take place next Sunday. He was also impressed by the image of prosperity which the country presents and prayed for its progress.

In his turn, His Excellency the Deputy President wholeheartedly welcomed His Beatitude, promised that the Orthodox Church would be afforded all possible assistance and asked His Beatitude to pray for peace and progress for the people of Burundi which has been tested so much in the past. Immediately thereafter His Beatitude and His Excellency the Deputy President gave a media interview.

His Beatitude visited the Holy Church of St Arsenios of Cappadocia in the Sanik district and was taken on a conducted tour of the adjacent Missionary Centre where a Catechetical School and Technological Institute are being developed.

He then went on to inspect the building of the Holy Church of St Dimitrios Tsarama, donated by the External Orthodox Mission of Thessaloniki, as well as the adjacent Polyclinic.

On the evening of the same day he attended the reception hosted in honour of the Alexandrian Primate by His Excellency the Ambassador of Egypt to Burundi Mr. Attia Abou Elnaga which was also attended by the Ambassadors of many other countries, among which were those of America, France, Russia, China, et al.

Archim. Meletios Koumanis