

HIS BEATITUDE CELEBRATES HIS NAME DAY WITH THE MEMBERS OF THE HOLY DIOCESE OF MADAGASCAR

His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa celebrated his name day in Antananarivo on 17th February 2008, conducting the Divine Liturgy in a huge athletics stadium, in the presence of hundreds of the local population, high ranking Ministers and Ambassadors from many African countries.

Despite the torrential downpours, there were citizens who traveled long distances to pay their respects to the Venerable Primate of the Orthodox Church of Africa.

"I came to celebrate my name day here in Madagascar , with my flock, my Orthodox brothers and sisters. And I thank you that today we have become one family", said His Beatitude when thanking everyone for coming.

Also, His Beatitude asked of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Marcel Ranjeva, to pass on his warmest greetings to His Excellency the President of the country, Mr. Marc Ravalomanana. "I want you to know that the Greek Orthodox Church will always be there for the people of Madagascar , to always do the best, with its schools, hospitals and anything else that it can offer the people of this African island". During the Divine Liturgy concelebrated by His Grace Bishop Ignatios of Madagascar and all the priests of the island, the ordination of a local Deacon was also conducted as were the elevation to Oikonomos of two priests, by His Beatitude.

His grace Bishop Ignatios then hosted an official lunch in honour of His Beatitude at a central Hotel in Antananarivo . In his address to those present, His Beatitude said:

"Following the spiritual table and the communion from the chalice of life, we are here at the table of God's given food, which, according to the tradition of our Holy Church , is a continuation of the worship and the spiritual elation.

We have come together here to enjoy all that His Grace Bishop Ignatios prepared for us, so that we may glorify "with one mouth and one heart" the true gift-giving God for His excellent gifts which He showers every day on Madagascar , where the people live in harmony, with no racial, religious, cultural or other distinctions.

We confess whatever we endure, whatever wonders we notice, whatever we live through in these few days among you, the spiritual children of the Patriarchal Throne of St Mark, the Christians of the Church of M a d a g a s c a r , Greeks and natives. Your filial love and dedication to our ancient missionary Patriarchate and to your Patriarch, who has today received many blessings, celebrating his name day with all of you, the Priests, the Officials and the people, is great and sincere. We thank you from our hearts for all that you have given us, for the kind words, gifts, rich hospitality and this lunch.

We wish to assure you that even from our See, the Great City of Alexandria, where our sainted predecessor Patriarchs lived and worked, we care and pray for you, with you in mind and spirit, taking note of your efforts, your work, your anxieties as well as your hymns and gratitude to the Almighty Heavenly Father.

paternally ask you to remain steadfast in the faith and unmoving in its traditions. And to pray that the Missionary work in Africa , the continent of the future, will continue ceaselessly so that others may be led to the Truth.

Your Grace, my beloved brothers and sisters,

I greet you with much love and fervent gratitude and we raise our glass for the long life and progress of the Officials and the people of the island of Madagascar , the members of the local church, and for peace and prosperity for the whole world".

His Grace, in his reply, expressed his filial love, and the joy and gratitude of the local Church for the presence of the Venerable Primate of the Throne of St mark, especially on this his name day.

Present on this day were Ministers and Ambassadors of African Countries in Madagascar , the Apostolic Nuncio, the Consul General of Greece Mr Panayiotis Taloumis, the Chairman of the Hellenic Community of Madagascar Mr Christos Spiliopoulos, and other dignitaries.